. . THE . .

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

. . OF AN . .

EIGHT DAYS' RETREAT.

ARRANGED FOR GENERAL USE

. . BY THE . .

REV. BONAVENTURE HAMMER, O. S. F.

With a Recommendation of the

MOST REV. JOHN J. KAIN,

Archbishop-Coadjutor and Administrator.

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B. HERDER,

ST. LOUIS, MO.

Dear Sir:

In addition to the formal Imprimatur given to the excellent work of Rev. Bonaventure Hammer, O. S. F., entitled: "The Spiritual Exercises of an Eight Days' Retreat," we wish to commend this book in a special manner to the Rev. Clergy and Religious, as well as to the pious laity, as a safe guide in those important matters which concern the soul's dearest interests.

Yours truly,

† JOHN J. KAIN,

Archbishop-Coadjutor and Administrator.

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PREFACE.

But few people in the world understand what a spiritual retreat means. To separate one's self from family, friends and business in order to treat with God in holy solitude on the affairs of eternity, on the world which is to come, seems to the majority of men useful at most for religious. Have, then, people of the world not to think of religious truths? Are these subjects for the devout only? Can a man of the world say, "I am perfect, what more do you want of me?" Well, suppose he might say so: this conclusion would only be the result of a serious self-consideration. Now this serious self-consideration of one's soul is the work, the object of a spiritual retreat.

Is it asking even the business man too much to lay aside for a few days his daily cares to settle the only necessary affair for which alone he is in the world; to see to and consider his eternal interests? Moreover, will not our very temporal affairs draw profit from the retreat? Is it not true that patience, freedom of mind, and self-control are great elements of success? Are there not moments in the lives of business men, when there is the greatest need of resignation and courage in order to avoid falling into despair? This courage, this confiding hope is the fruit of a spiritual retreat.

It is true, we have at times in parishes the ordinary public mission exercises — excellent indeed as far as they go. But are the fruits thereof complete? On leaving the church, business affairs

beset us, absorb our time, and leave us not a moment for reflection on the great truths we have been hurriedly listening to. We are answered that assiduous attention to business is a duty, a professional obligation; that there is also a duty a man owes to his family, and that this is more imperative even than the former. Granted — but should not one examine from time to time how these duties are discharged? Are these duties so easy, that for the worthy fulfilling of the same there is no need either of supernatural grace, nor heavenly light, nor fortitude from above? Would a few days consecrated to all this be judged to be too long a time?

Each year some unforeseen circumstance imposes on us the necessity of temporarily interrupting our business — an illness, a death, a voyage, or some family event. Could we not also interrupt it for a spiritual retreat? Would our affairs prosper less for it? Is not God the origin and end of all things? Is it not He who illumines all intelligence? Is not He the Rewarder of all humble and sincere faith? Does He not promise special mercy to those who seek first, above all things else, His kingdom and His justice? — Besides, death is most certain, the time thereof most uncertain. This very year may be our last here below. What a happiness to have made the preparation in a good retreat!

If you yet wish to object, say candidly that you fear a retreat, because it would do you more good than you wish for; but do not say, "What use is a retreat?" for you surely know how beneficial it is. Say neither, "I have no time;" for a retreat

is more necessary for you than for many others, for you who, in the midst of the fever of business excitement, find no time for reflection on eternity, for you whose occupations, centered on what is merely visible and alluring in this world, so tend to captivate the mind and heart that you are in special danger of losing sight of the invisible but great realities of your eternal interests; for you, who have in so many ways the responsibility of those in your employ; for you, who have need of so many and strong graces to persevere in charity and justice.

The days of a spiritual retreat, where the special light of Heaven awaits you, are the spiritual fountains in which you find the inestimable gift announced by the angels "to men of good will," that "peace on earth" which God alone can give.

Although there are many excellent books which present the eternal truths of religion and the means for a sincere amendment of life in a series of meditations useful for a retreat, yet a work that reduces to practice *all* the principal spiritual exercises of such a holy time of retirement and recollection does not seem superfluous.

The pious reader will perceive that this little volume not only presents to his mind meditations proper, but also spiritual readings and conferences. Due attention was given to draw from approved sources, and to present everything in a manner calculated to promote the principal object of the spiritual exercises, which is, not only to stimulate the mind to reflection, but to give to reflection itself that practical direction which, after enlightening

the intellect, moves the heart, and influences conduct.

Each evening meditation is followed by a short review of the points treated, and is presented, in the same or some kindred relation, for reconsideration next morning, thus still more to impress the mind, and to ensure practical results.

The subjects treated of are such as interest every one alike — the priest, the religious and the lay man. Persons of each class will find sufficient material from which to draw conclusions and form resolutions for the promotion of their spiritual welfare, and applicable to their state of life, if they exercise their mental faculties as should be done in a manner concisely explained in the introduction.

INTRODUCTION.

The following Instructions, Spiritual Readings and Conferences are intended to furnish subjects of meditation and self-examination during a retreat of eight days. It will be in vain for us to promise ourselves any solid or lasting fruits from the best instructions, if we do not learn to consider meditation as one of our most important and indispensable duties, and as such persevere in it with the utmost exactness. A great deal depends on our conceiving ideas of this holy exercise so correct as to prevent our being misled by the illusion of those who call meditation an exercise of extreme difficulty, or else of too great sublimity for ordinary Christians. Experience teaches that those who pronounce most decidedly on the difficulty of meditation, are always the very persons who never attempt it, and who certainly on that account alone, are of all others least qualified to give an opinion on an exercise of which they have no experimental knowledge.

Still, notwithstanding the unfounded prejudices entertained against it, nothing is more certain than that this exercise is morally necessary for those who would work out their salvation, and that it is so easy, and so adapted to the most limited understanding that every person is capable of it.

According to the unanimous opinion of the holy Fathers, meditation is indispensably necessary, because it is impossible to know the truths and the mysteries of our holy religion, except by the

eyes of the soul, in other words, by frequent and serious reflection. St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom assert, that reflection and consideration on the truths of salvation are the foundation of good works; and certainly it is clear to every one, that those who do not meditate or reflect on the maxims of the Gospel, on their various duties, on the obstacles which impede their progress in virtue, and the means best calculated for removing them, run a very great risk of forgetting these maxims, neglecting these duties, yielding to these obstacles, and slighting these means, and consequently of being eternally lost. On the contrary, those who meditate assiduously, morally ensure their salvation; because meditation naturally produces such good desires, holy affections and efficacious resolutions, as at length excite to the execution of good designs, to the perfect amendment of life, and to the habitual practice of virtue. It is God that speaks to us in meditation, and God speaks to us much better than any preacher can. It is through meditation that the saints have been sanctified, for it is in meditation we learn to turn away our hearts from this world, and direct them towards God.

How consoling, then, to think that an exercise so necessary is so easy. In effect, nothing more is requisite for meditation, than to be endowed with reason, because meditation is nothing more than an exercise of the three powers of the soul, memory, understanding and will; that is, an application of those three powers to some practical object, whether spiritual or temporal. Therefore it is clear that meditation, rightly understood, is not only easily,

but universally practised, since all, from the first to the last, have some object in view, some scheme to accomplish, some business to pursue; and there is no one, if he wishes to avoid being rash or foolish, who does not frequently reflect on and adopt the means most likely to ensure success. The greatest saint is distinguished from the greatest worldling not so much by meditating or reflecting more fervently or more profoundly, but by the different subjects of his reflection.

For example, what difficulty does a merchant find in meditating, that is, reasoning and reflecting on commerce, a farmer on husbandry, a tradesman on his employment? These persons frequently call to mind what they hear or see against the plans they pursue, and thus they exercise the *memory;* they make serious reflections on what they find profitable or the reverse; and consider frequently how far their plans are likely to ensure success or risk failure: this is an exercise of the *understanding*. Lastly, however little capacity these persons may have, their reflections never fail to excite in their *will* determinations as to their conduct, arising from the hopes and desires of success, fear or danger, or sorrow for disappointment, which is the exercise of the *will;* and these same reflections afterwards urge them to take better precautions against the accidents they foresee, and to adopt such measures as may repair past losses, and ensure them ultimate advantage.

This is what is called *meditation;* and is it not clear that it is practised by persons of every description? What, then, can hinder those who reflect, or

meditate, on temporal concerns, from doing the same in the momentous business of their eternal salvation? Why should they not in the same manner reflect on what may conduce or hinder their attainment of heaven? Why should they not examine well the state of their soul, its dispositions and inclinations, and consider what they ought to pursue or avoid? The whole secret is to think of eternity as often as we do of time, to feel as much interest for our soul as we do for our body, and to be as willing to encounter difficulties and overcome obstacles for immortal treasures, as we are for perishable goods. But, alas, the want of these dispositions constitutes the difficulty of meditating on spiritual matters. — "With desolation is the earth made desolate, because there is no one that considereth in his heart." (Jerem. XII. 11.)

Still, as the dispositions for meditation are acquired and perfected by the habit of this exercise, you cannot be too strenuously exhorted to adopt and persevere in the holy custom of devoting a short time daily to meditation on some of those great truths of salvation, which, at the time of death, will most certainly appear to you as alone worthy of consideration.

To meditate with fruit, observe the following method:

1) Call to mind the presence of God by a short act of faith, and profoundly adore Him.

2) Make a short act of contrition, because sin is the greatest obstacle to communication with God.

3) Implore the assistance of the Holy Ghost, to make the meditation in a manner pleasing to God and profitable to your soul.

4) Then call to mind the Christian truth or mystery on which you desire to meditate. Thinking on this to the best of your power is the proper exercise of *memory*. It is almost morally impossible that no reflection will arise or present itself to your mind concerning the truth you have presented for consideration. Any reflection, even one thought, however simple, will suffice, if you dwell on it, and endeavor to penetrate its meaning. These reflections will naturally lead you to consider the state of your soul, to draw from the truth on which you meditate some conclusion for the reformation of your life. Thus you exercise your *understanding*.

5) From the understanding having been convinced and enlightened by reflection, there must follow that the *will* is affected according to the nature of the objects reflected on. For example, such alarming truths as the rigorous justice of God, hell, eternity, will produce in our hearts fear, contrition and horror. Those subjects that are amiable and attractive, as the Most Holy Eucharist, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Heaven, etc., will, on the contrary, excite feelings of love, admiration, gratitude, hope and confidence, and in producing such acts, together with the *resolutions* to which they lead, consists the exercise of the *will*.

6) After having discovered by meditation what we have to do, on our part, in order to live in conformity with the holy will of God, and having asked His assistance, it still remains for us to put in practice what we have thus seen to be necessary; otherwise our meditation will be fruitless. We must therefore make a *serious resolve* to avoid such

a fault, to practise such and such a virtue, to do this or that good work on the very first occasion. It is necessary, also, from time to time during the day, to recall the good resolution we have made.

7) After the good resolution comes the end of meditation. We must *thank God* for the holy inspirations he has given us, and *implore His aid* to put our resolutions into practice.

So much concerning meditation in general, as it is to be practised every day. Concerning the use of this book during the time of retreat, the most profitable manner to proceed will be in regard to the meditations proper, as well as in regard to the spiritual readings and conferences: After having invoked the Holy Ghost, you read a few sentences, then stop to consider, and ask yourself the following questions:

1) What does the holy faith here say to me?

2) What must I do to put in practice its teaching in this matter?

3) What have I done hitherto?

4) What am I willing to do in future?

Then ask of God, through Mary, to give you His assistance, and proceed to the next point. Thus you can occupy a long time on each subject, and, with the grace of God, your retreat will be a profitable one.

I.

Preparatory Meditation.

On the Spirit in which to enter the Retreat.

"Rise thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall enlighten thee." — Ephes. V. 14.

Two things are necessary for man to live well and holily: namely, to avoid evil and to do good. To attain this end, the spiritual exercises of a retreat are most powerful and efficacious; for they act on a soul as cleansing and ornamenting does on a room. How is a chamber put in order? The floor is well swept, each corner is dusted, what is disorderly is set right, everything is put in its place, and all that can be procured to embellish it is added. Thus we act during the retreat with the soul. With no other occupation, in a sequestered spot, with a clear light from God, we review the secret windings of our conscience, its evil habits, our past faults in cleansing ourselves by penance. Then we think seriously of beginning a new life—religious and holy.

It appears that the royal prophet David acted thus when he said, "I remembered God, and was delighted, and was exercised: and my spirit swooned away." (Ps. LXXVI. 4.) He then explains how he did this, and it is precisely what is done in the exercises of a retreat. First: "I meditated with my heart." Here was meditation.

Secondly: "I was troubled, and I spoke not. I thought upon the days of old." Here was silence and examination of the past life. Thirdly: "I was exercised and swept my spirit." Here was prayer and repentance. Fourthly: "And I said, "Now I have begun: this is the change of the right hand of the Most High." Here is the fruit; that is, a serious change of life. Thus acted the royal prophet, and the same are we to do in these holy exercises. *We are to meditate at leisure and seriously the truths of eternity.*

It is God who calls you to this retreat. Therefore you must correspond with this grace, and use it according to God's will, that is, for your conversion. It is through His particular love for you that God grants you this grace. It is not granted to every one. Multitudes to whom a grace like this would be the best remedy for their spiritual ailments, receive it not. Through a particular mercy of God it is granted to you: with what scrupulous care, then, should you not profit by it? —Do not say that during the course of the year you consider the eternal truths by meditating, reading or hearing sermons. The seed thrown on the ground by the evangelical Sower was perfectly good; however, that portion which fell on stones no sooner appeared than it was sun-burnt; that which fell among the thorns scarcely rose when it was choked with brambles, and the seed that fell on the highway was trampled under foot. The evangelical truths are always the same; but if they occur to a distracted mind, occupied with a thousand affairs and interests, or to one exposed to vanity or

worldly affections, they make slight impression, and then vanish. Hence for the soul to profit by them, they must be meditated on in holy retirement.

During the remainder of the year it seldom happens that these truths are heard in so striking a manner as they are laid before us during the retreat, so that they are here so many drawn swords which strike deeply. Besides, God communicates Himself to us more or less in heavenly lights according to our dispositions; and where can a person be better disposed to be enlightened than in a retreat?

If you have hitherto performed similar spiritual exercises without profit and improvement, resolve now to amend all your faults and to remove every obstacle that might obstruct the workings of God's grace.

To intimate the Law to the Israelites, God conducted them into the desert, that there, without disturbance, they might better hear His voice. There also He nourished them with manna, which may be called a representation of the retreat. As that was very small, but of great virtue, so the sentiments which here are meditated on, are short, but of great virtue and efficacy. Man can never better hear the voice of God, and taste the manna of spiritual consolation, than in the desert of holy retreat.

Our Divine Saviour, before entering upon His work of instructing mankind, was led into the desert by the Spirit of God. You must follow His example during this retreat, if you wish it to be effective and salutary as regards your necessities

and the expectations of God. God, Who wishes to sanctify you, calls you rather to an internal than to an external solitude; for the latter is worthless without the former. Therefore you must withdraw yourself during these holy days from everything that might distract you. You must act as if God and you alone were in the world. You must occupy yourself only with Him. You must reject every other thought, though good in itself, and however promotive of good it might seem, because by dividing your attention, and diverting it from the great work on hand, such a thought would be harmful.

God wishes to be alone with you, because He wishes to speak to your heart. Therefore your heart must be emptied of the world, and not only of the world at large, but also of that little world which is a part of yourself, and consists of your passions, your restlessness, your curiosity, your disorderly inclinations. As long as your heart is occupied with this little world, you will not be able to hear Him.

Woe unto you if you should bring this little world into the sanctuary of this solitude; that is, if you should enter upon this retreat with a distracted spirit and an unmortified heart. A vain desire, a secret morosity, a hidden aversion, an occult jealousy, a too human affection are sufficient to effect this, and thereby to render yourself incapable of the friendship, and unable to hear the discourse of your Divine Master. Should this be the case with you, you would not find God in this retreat, however edifying it might appear, because

God would not find in you that perfect recollection which a soul must possess in order to enjoy intercourse with Him. Say, then, with David, "I will hear what the Lord God will speak within me," (Ps. LXXXIV. 9.), and with Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." (I. Kings, III. 9.) Follow the example of His holy Mother Mary, and treasure up in your heart all His words, in which He is about to reveal to you His holy will.

Enter into yourself; review in your mind the disorderly life you have hitherto led; see how your conscience has become defiled, and become convinced that you really require this retreat. In it you have to consider your most important affair, your salvation. If you knew for certain that this retreat were to be the last of your life, that at its termination you were immediately to die, with what fervor would you perform it! Who knows if these are not the last admonitions, the last graces which God will give you?

Do, then, all in your power to make this retreat profitable for your spiritual welfare. That is, *First*, Perform all its spiritual exercises in earnest. *Secondly*, Perform them with recollection. *Thirdly*, Perform them with tranquility and submission to the will of God.

1. *The retreat must be made in earnest.*

Many wonder at themselves, and say that they have frequently made the spiritual exercises without reaping any of the fruit which is attributed to them. In truth, they do not speak justly, and have given proof of it. They have performed the exercises, observing an exterior composure and

retirement, but have not, in reality, penetrated the eternal truths, have not endeavored to practise what they meditated. Thus it is not surprising that they were little benefited. To judge from appearances they seem to make the retreat: they are modest, devout, contrite; but the mind is not well persuaded of the eternal truths, nor is the heart well resolved to give itself to God. It is, then, necessary to perform these exercises in earnest. Therefore, having heard or read the points of reflection you should thus discourse with yourself: Is this true or not?—If it be true, why do I defer coming to a conclusion?—Having made a courageous resolution, come to the practice of what has been proposed. Hence St. Ignatius, being enlightened by God, called these instructions not spiritual *meditations*, but spiritual *exercises;* for it would avail little to meditate on them, if what has been meditated on is not practised or exercised.

2. *The retreat must be made with recollection*, both with relation to God and to ourselves.

As to what relates to God, it is said, "They shall give glory to the Lord, and shall declare His praise in the islands." (Isai. XLII. 12.) God seems to show Himself more bountiful towards those who, retired from the affairs of the world, appear as so many islands separated from the continent. The Holy Ghost descended in the room of the Last Supper, the doors being closed and the Disciples and Apostles being in retreat; the manna fell from heaven when the Israelites were in the desert: thus also the Divine Spirit and the manna of heavenly illumination and consolation are more

abundantly communicated during the retreat, because of greater solitude. Concerning ourselves, this is also very necessary; for the mind, if not entirely divested of earthly thoughts, cannot be disposed for those relating to the spirit. As water, in fountains not well inclosed, cannot ascend on high, so the soul, when not well inclosed in solitude, cannot ascend to the contemplation of heavenly things. To make the retreat well, we must observe the saying of St. Augustine, "Take thyself from thyself; remove every impediment." We should say to all temporal things, and to our usual occupations, what Jesus said to His Apostles in Gethsemani, "Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray." (Matth. XXVI. 36.)

3. The retreat must be made in great tranquility of mind, and with submission to the will of God.

The evil spirit, in order to prevent the fruits of a retreat, tries by all means to disturb those that make one. When St. Ignatius, at Manresa, wrote his admirable Book of Spiritual Exercises, the evil spirit tried to annoy him with various illusions. In phantastical forms he appeared in the air, strange to behold. But the saint treated him with ridicule, and the tempter fled.

The evil spirit annoys some by inducing them to think solitude insupportable. Let such reflect that physicians keep sick persons in retirement for weeks, and they submit willingly in order to regain health of body. And for the salvation of the soul a retreat of a few days cannot be endured, even with the liberty of taking the air! Besides, there is this difference between spiritual and temporal

enjoyments: the latter appear sweet, but are full of bitterness; the former appear disagreeable and bitter, but are full of sweetness. The royal prophet says, "O taste and see that the Lord is sweet." (Ps. XXXIII. 9.) Make a trial of applying yourself to prayer; taste, and you will find what interior consolations God communicates to His servants.

The evil spirit tempts others with the semblance of a greater good, such as to settle the conscience. For this purpose he distracts them entirely from the meditations, and keeps them occupied with a thousand scrupulosities, thinking of the sins of their past life. Oh, what a deceit! The fruits of a retreat are not scruples, but the reformation of manners: so that we must spend the time, first, in imprinting on our minds the eternal truths; then, in forming strong resolutions of the will. As to what relates to conscience, communicate, at the end of the retreat, with a wise director, and obey him in all things. It is, moreover, necessary to abandon self with perfect indifference into the hands of God, and to be disposed to do what He inspires.

The object and end of your retreat then is completely to change your life by remodeling it in the spirit of your vocation; to learn to know yourself and the intentions of God concerning you; to inquire earnestly into the causes of your evil habits and imperfections; to bring your actions, your entire deportment, and even your thoughts and desires into perfect correspondence with the spirit of your vocation, in a word, to become, as St. Paul says, "in Christ a new creature." (II. Cor. V. 17.)

If you should have any other object than this in

view during this retreat; if you leave it without having begun to reform your defects and imperfections, it will be in vain that you experience the most ardent affections of devotion: they will be a mere delusion. *The object of this retreat is your conversion,* and not exalted meditation or deep contemplation. And even this object is not expressed distinctly enough when stated in so general a manner. Your purpose, in order to be effective, must be directed at something definite. You must examine before God whether, in order to attain the special object of this retreat, your purpose of amendment must refer to the eradication of some definite vice, or to the cultivation of charity, purity, mortification or similar virtues.

Consider, then, the maxims on which you may establish the great edifice of perfection, and ponder on them during these sacred days. Concisely stated they are as follows:

1) Often recall to mind that you are in this world to save your soul. Consequently you must apply yourself to fulfill exactly and constantly all the duties of your state of life. It is in this that true and solid perfection consists.

2) Never do anything contrary to the dictates of an upright conscience, because a conscience enlightened by grace is the sure rule of conduct that God has given to man. We must never purposely act against this light, but conform to it and follow its guidance.

3) Behold in everything, sin alone excepted, the will of God. A faithful soul should on all occasions observe with simplicity what is the will of God,

and conform exactly to it, whether it be to act or to suffer. By this one will rapidly advance in the way of perfection, and will infallibly attain that sanctity to which God has called him.

4) Esteem or value only what contributes to salvation. All things temporal, however great or attractive they may be, do not merit our notice, because they serve not for eternity.

5) Be careful to make great account of the smallest spiritual profit or loss. In proportion as we please, or displease God, we shall enjoy His presence more or less for all eternity. The least degree of the possession of God infinitely surpasses all the gratifications of this world; consequently the least profit, or slightest spiritual loss should excite all our care and vigilance.

6) Be not troubled at your faults. We are frail and weak, and there would be pride in supposing we are not liable to fall. Certainly, we should omit nothing to guard against our failings, because there is question of offending God; but when we have fallen we must rise speedily, humbly ask pardon of God, and not feel afflicted or dejected: all this proceeds from a fund of self-love, and may be occasion of faults still greater than the first.

7) Dying to self is a most essential and necessary condition of salvation. Everything painful to nature is of great value in this regard. A soul should embrace with ardor all that is repugnant to nature, and choose it in preference to what is gratifying and flattering. We should remember that the voice of nature seduces, but the inspirations of grace conduct to life.

8) A practice equally important is to have in all things God alone in view, seeking only His glory and His good pleasure. In this purity of intention, this single view of God, consists the merit of all our actions; for want of it the best lose their value, and are often even displeasing to God by the defective motives which steal in and sully them.

9) Recollect the presence of God. This practice contributes much to sanctify our actions. It banishes useless thoughts, recalls us from distraction, animates and supports us. "Walk before me, and be perfect," (Gen. XVII. 1.) says Our Lord. Therefore say often to yourself, "God sees me; God hears me; God will judge me." This thought is sufficient of itself to make us avoid a number of faults, and to excite us to many acts of virtue. Let us make it the rule of our conduct.

About to enter on this retreat, resolve to make use of these recommendations, which are essential to a fruitful result of your spiritual exercises. Finally, persuade yourself that to attain salvation you must suffer some inconveniences. "God, Who created you without your consent, will not save you without your co-operation." This saying of St. Augustine is well known, and none the less true.

Now that God extends, as it were, His hand from heaven to draw you out of the depth of your spiritual misery, do you also raise your hands to Him. Cling to Him, so that this retreat may become for you a source of grace in time, and the pledge of your happiness for an endless eternity.

PRAYER.

Enlighten me, O Lord, direct and assist me during this holy retreat. As Thou leadest me into seclusion, guide me also to that perfection, and the means to attain it, to which Thou hast called me. Do not permit, I beseech Thee, that these spiritual exercises, which for so many have been a means of conversion, be for me, through negligence and tepidity on my part, the cause of damnation.

What wilt Thou that I shall do, O my God? Behold, I am ready to correspond with Thy adorable intentions concerning me as soon as I shall have learned them. I may, however, delude myself, and there may be hidden in my heart self-love and vanity. Assist me, O Lord, to know and remove these obstacles. Perfect the preparation of my heart. It wishes to be subject to Thee, and to withdraw from all exterior conversation to receive more easily the impressions of Thy grace and Spirit. Amen.

II.

Points of Meditation for next Morning.

On Spiritual Recollection.

"I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart." — Osee II. 14.

1. *By spiritual recollection we draw near to God.*— Spiritual recollection is the soul's first step from sin to grace, or from a life of luke-warmness to a life of zeal. As soon as the Prodigal son recollected himself, his eyes were opened to the misery of his condition. The same happens in the case of a soul that abandoned itself to tepidity. As soon as it recollects itself, and meditates on the words, "Because thou art luke-warm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth," (Apoc. III. 16.), it will be roused from its dangerous lethargy.

2. *Spiritual recollection removes us from many temptations.*—In recollection we are open to the influence of God's grace, we are moved to accept it, to co-operate with it. By recollection we are taught to watch diligently over the inclinations of nature, and to suppress them, or to guide them into their lawful channels. On the other hand, a distracted, dissipated soul is inconstant; ever eager for sensual enjoyments, it is open to every temptation.

3. *Spiritual recollection preserves us from sin.* By it the soul is filled with light and strength, thereby receiving two powerful aids to overcome sin, this work of darkness and frailty. Recollection reminds

us: "God is present; He sees me! His presence at the same time enlightens and strengthens me." Holy Scripture mentions forgetfulness of God as one of the general causes of sin, and alludes to recollection and the continual mindfulness of God's presence as the source of perseverance in grace.

First Day.

Meditation during the Forenoon.

III.

On the End of Man.

"It is written: The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him alone shalt thou serve." — Matth. IV. 10.

The principal object of the retreat is to become imbued with a realization of the true end for which man was created. For as a building rests on its foundation, thus all the other eternal truths of faith rest on this one, so that the good result of the retreat depends in a great measure on the right perception and understanding of this one truth: "Man is created to love the Lord, his God, to adore and serve Him, and thereby to save his soul." Everything else on earth was created for the sake of man, that he might thereby attain the end of his creation.

The purpose of this meditation is to make us acquainted with the purpose of our creation; it is to draw our soul to the contemplation of itself, to investigate the error of our ways in abusing the creatures of God for the purpose of abandoning Him, instead of making use of them to draw nearer and nearer to Him.

God is our Creator. From Him we have our origin, hence we belong to Him. Our soul, created after God's image, participates in His perfections, in His knowledge, liberty, immensity, etc. — O human soul, cease to admire the distance of the stars, the depth of the ocean, the splendor of the

sun. Admire thyself; thou art the image of God! There is scarcely anything of His essence, of which He has not given thee a part. Thou art a spirit: thou art immortal, than art God's image! O soul, higher than the heavens, deeper than the abysses, broader than the universe, more enduring than time, greater than all visible creation — remain true to thy station, do not abase thyself by seeking happiness in created things!

If God is my Creator, He is also my Lord, and I am His property. If everything that I am and possess is from Him, I belong wholly to Him. A master has a right to the labor of his servant, a father to the obedience, love and reverence of his children. As I am the creature of God, I belong to Him in a much greater degree than the servant belongs to the master, the child to his father. Hence, by the free resolve of my will, I will be His, His alone and for ever.

I belong entirely to God. — God created me and supports me for the sole purpose that I praise, adore and serve Him. He is the supreme Bounty, Who endowed me with intelligence to know Him. He is the supreme Beauty, Who gave me a heart to love Him. He is my supreme and absolute Lord, from Whom I received all my spiritual and corporal faculties for the sole purpose to render Him thereby the homage and obedience which I owe Him. "It is truly meet and just, right and salutary, that we should always and in all places give thanks to Thee." Truly, there is nothing more equitable, O my God, but that I should be uninterruptedly intent on thanking and glorifying

Thee by submission to Thy divine will. I may not omit this without infringing on Thy rights. Nothing is more meet for a soul endowed with intelligence, for a Christian called to the service of God. It is herein that our dignity, our glory lies: we share, in a certain sense, God's attributes, if we make His will our will, if our whole mode of action is modeled on His. And what can be more profitable, "just, right and salutary," for us than this disposition? Therefore, let the motives of all our thoughts, words and deeds be, "For the greater glory of God!"

God is our all.—In the same manner as God desires that we glorify Him, He also desires our welfare and eternal salvation. Hence He has ordained that it should depend on the manner in which we serve Him. He might say to us, "If you keep my commandments you perform your duty, and no harm shall befall you." But He says, instead, "Serve me, and you shall receive a magnificent reward: 'I am thy reward exceeding great.'" (Gen. XV. 1.) Incomprehensible reward! It relates to eternity. But even in this life He rewards those that devote themselves to His service. He takes up His abode in their hearts, He reigns therein, He replenishes them with that peace which is beyond all comprehension. He defends them against their enemies; He graciously hears their prayers and grants their petitions. His Providence watches over them like a mother watches over the child which is the sole object of her affections.

Christian soul! Thou art consumed with a desire for bliss; thou knowest that God alone can satisfy

this thy desire, and yet thou perseverest in seeking outside of God what thou canst find only in Him. Wilt thou squander thy whole life in these unprofitable experiments? How much time hast thou hitherto abused in loving the nothingness and vanity of created things! How deplorable, that thou hast strayed from the right path! O my God! Sever me from everything except Thyself! Draw me to Thee alone! Thou hast permitted that I should find nothing but misery and suffering without Thee; yet, to my confusion, I have derived no profit from my sad experiences.

The same demonstration that man is created for God alone, logically leads to the conclusion that all created things are to be considered only in their relation to God. They are the means by which we should be drawn towards Him. Hence follows that we ought to make use of created things only when and inasmuch as they are conducive to this end.

Not only our fellow men, but all things existing in creation — animals, plants, the elements, natural endowments, talents, are but so many means for the attainment of our end, instruments to be employed in the service of God. An instrument is good only inasmuch as its serves its purpose; it becomes worthless when it ceases to be useful, and still more so when it becomes an obstacle. Creatures, then, may please us ever so much; this alone does not render them valuable, and is not a sufficient reason for us to make use of them. For what is pleasing to the senses may nevertheless be a hindrance to the attainment of our end, whilst

things that repel us, and these sometimes alone, are serviceable for this purpose.

But because we abhor things that are displeasing to us, and use them not as means for our end, whilst we seek our pleasure and enjcyment, making use of the latter without measure and order, hence the great and deplorable disorders and imperfections of which we are guilty, hence so many sins, hence the sum of all spiritual and temporal evils. This is the snare and error: as soon as we cease to regard the creatures as a means and help to find God, we make them the object of our affections, and, in a manner, permit them to take God's place. This is a kind of idolatry, for in this case they occupy our thoughts, ensnare us, take possession of our heart; all our affections are concentrated on them. We devote all our time, means and faculties to gain possession of them.—But we should remember created beings and objects only for the purpose of growing in the love of God. Instead of doing this, however, we think of God, have recourse to Him, pray to Him — only for the purpose of attaining sooner and more easily the possession of creatures.

O deplorable blindness! Man is created to love the Lord, his God, to adore and serve Him, and thereby to save his soul — and he turns away from God, loves and serves creatures and incurs eternal damnation! — Let us henceforth use the world and its creatures as a ladder on which to ascend to God, our ultimate end. St. Bernard remarks: "All created things were given us for our salvation and welfare, but contribute towards it in various

ways. Some are for the preservation of our life and strength, others for our instruction, others again for recreation, and still others for our probation and improvement." True wisdom consists therein, that we use these various things according to the will of God, and with reference to our immediate needs.

If there is question of created things such as we cannot live without, as nourishment, clothing, dwelling, rest, etc., be content with what is necessary, and use it gratefully. Renounce the superfluous in a spirit of sacrifice. These created things are saying to you, "Use, return, fear! Use the benefit which I confer; return thanks to Him from Whom and for Whom you receive me; fear the account which you must render for the manner in which you used me." (*Richard of St. Victor.*) — It is not in our power to determine whether we shall see, hear and experience things and persons pleasant or displeasing around us or not; but in everything we find occasion to raise our hearts to God. This is what the saints call finding God in the creatures.

With regard to indifferent things, such as we may or may not use, the following rule is given. We should be entirely indifferent towards them until we have fully scrutinized them and discovered whether and in what degree they are calculated to bring us nearer to God and to our last end. We are neither to seek nor to avoid these things for their own sake, but only with a view to their conduciveness to our salvation. For we belong to God in virtue of His omnipotent creative and proprietary right. "Thou hast created us for Thee, O

God, and our heart remains unsatisfied until it rests in Thee." (*St. Augustine.*) God, and God alone is our end. "My God and my All!" (*St. Francis.*)

Therefore, seek God alone. Make use of the visible creation around you for this purpose. Thereby you not only fulfill your duty towards God, but also use His creation according to His will. Remembering that "Nobody can serve two masters," (Matth. VI. 24.,), conclude this meditation with the following

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH.

O God, the Protector of them that hope in Thee, without Whom nothing is strong, nothing holy: multiply Thy mercy upon us, that, guided and directed by Thee, we may so pass through things temporal, as not to lose the eternal. Through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Spiritual Reading.

IV.

Our Duty towards God.

Such was the thoughtless ingratitude of the Jewish people that it was found necessary, again and again, to remind them of the relations they bore to God; how He was their Creator and their Father, they His creatures and His children. And do not we also need to be reminded of the same? Hence the psalmist says, "He made us, and not we ourselves." (Ps. XCIX. 3.) Yet, how often do we find ourselves acting as independent beings; as

if we had come here of ourselves, and could live by our own effort? But, says the inspired writer, "How could anything endure, if Thou wouldst not? or be preserved if not called by Thee?" (Wisd. XI. 26.)

It is by God's power that we live. If He withdrew His hand for a moment, we should fall away and be nothing again. His Providence is always engaged about us, saving us in a thousand ways and keeping us in all our dangers.

But there is a relation more endearing still—God is our Father. And He wishes us to remember it: "Thus therefore shall you pray: Our Father, Who art in heaven." (Matth. VI. 9.) Thus is the question answered, "What is God to us?" He is our Creator and our Father. In these two relations everything is included. God is everything to us; He is our first beginning and our last end. All that we have and all that we hope for is from Him. And lest His majesty should strike us dumb with fear, and hinder our free converse with Him, He stoops down and tells the inspired writer to ask us, "Is not He thy father, that hath possessed thee, and made thee, and created thee?" (Deuter. XXXII. 6.) Oh, love and honor your Father, Who is in heaven, lest the complaint of His Holy Spirit apply to you, "If I, then, be a Father, where is my honor? And if I be a master, where is my fear?" (Malach. I. 6.) There are masters in this world, and their servants dare not approach them in any other capacity than that of servants whose duty is trembling obedience. Our Lord and Master, Whose will is obeyed in heaven, Who rules on earth and

is feared in hell, wishes us to approach Him, and to call Him what He really is, Our Father. What a privilege!

If God be our Creator, then we are His creatures; if He be our Father, then we are His children.—We are His creatures, the work of His hands: "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me." (Job X. 8.) We are not only made by His hands, but we are still, even now, in His hands; and to show us our duty as creatures, He asks, "Shall the clay boast against him that fashioneth it?" (Isai. XLV. 9.) Yes, even as the inanimate clay is shaped, now in one way and now in another, as it is destined now to one use, now to another, even so should our free will be pliant to the will of God: so much so, that we have nothing else to do. So thought the prophet Jonas. When asked who he was, whence he came and whither he was going, he answered, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven." (Jon. I. 9.) To fear God, and to fear him with a filial fear is our duty. With a filial fear, for we must never forget that we are His children. Oh, what a happiness to be called, and to be, a child of God! You may be poor, looked down upon, cast off by the great ones of this world, but you are not cast off by God. In the greatest poverty, in the lowest degradation He acknowledges you as His own. Nay more, your poverty is of itself a title to His special favor, for has He not said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven?" (Matth. V. 3.) But if we enjoy the privilege of children, we must not forget the duties which such a privilege involves.

A child must love and obey his father. Let not your Heavenly Father inquire of you complainingly, "If, then, I be a Father, where is my honor?" (Malach. I. 6.)

But besides being God's creatures, His children, we are His by another title: He has redeemed us. We had forfeited our rights as children, the title He had given us to a heavenly heritage, and the Son of God came to undo the work of sin. Oh what a history of love and suffering is contained in this simple statement! "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" (Ps. VIII. 5.) What is man, that God should annihilate Himself for him, taking the form of a servant? What is man, that God should love him to the end, even to the extreme of dying for him?

We are, then, God's creatures, the work of His hands, His property. We are His children, His redeemed children, "bought with a great price." (I. Cor. VI. 20.) It follows then, as a clear consequence, that we should love and serve Him, that we should live for Him, "in holiness and justice before Him, all our days." (Luke I. 75.)

Our duty towards God, then, is: first, to *know* Him; that is, to learn of Him, to learn what He has revealed, what He wishes us to know about Himself, and then to *serve* Him *in love,* and ultimately to be united with Him in His blessed kingdom.

Afternoon Conference.

V.

On Self-Knowledge.

Strange as it may seem, a great many people go through life with no effort to obtain a correct knowledge of themselves. They are contented with general and vague impressions concerning their state, and if they have more than this, it is merely such accidental information as the events of life force upon them. Now, whoever would arrive at perfection, must thoroughly know himself, and only he knows himself, who has a clear and distinct insight into the state of his soul, so as to be well aware of the particular passions which most endanger his salvation, and fully convinced of the various faults and imperfections which reign within him. Such self-knowledge is justly regarded as the first requisite for a true conversion, because it shows us our secret faults. That we have such is a fact which we are all ready to confess in general terms, though few like calmly and practically to own it when reduced to particulars.

The most ready method of convincing ourselves of the existence in us of faults unknown to ourselves, is to consider how plainly we see the faults of others. At first sight, there is, of course, no reason for supposing that we differ materially from those around us; and if we see sins in them which they do not see, it is a presumption that they have own discoveries about ourselves, which it would surprise us to hear. For instance: How apt is an angry man to fancy that he has the command of

himself! The very charge of being angry, if brought against him, will anger him more; and in the height of his discomfiture he will profess himself able to reason and judge with clearness and impartiality. Now, it may be his turn another day, for what we know, to witness the same failing in us; or, if we are not naturally inclined to violent passion, still at least we may be subject to other sins, equally unknown to ourselves, and equally known to him as his anger was to us. But let us say, for the sake of argument, that no human being sees in us sins of which we are not aware ourselves: why should man's accidental knowledge of us limit the extent of our imperfections? If all the world speak well of us, after all there is a Judge Who searches the hearts: He knows our real state. Have we earnestly besought Him to teach us the knowledge of our own hearts? If we have not, that very omission is a presumption against us. Though our praise were throughout the Church, we may be sure He sees sins without number in us, of which we have no idea. If a man sees so much evil in human nature, what must God see? Not acts alone of sin does He set down against us daily, but thoughts of the heart too. The stirrings of pride and vanity, covetousness, impurity, discontent, resentment, succeed each other through the day in momentary emotions, and are known to Him. We know them not, but how much does it concern us to know Them!

This consideration is suggested by the first view of the subject. Now reflect upon the *actual disclosures* of our hidden weakness, which accidents

occasion. Peter followed Christ boldly, and suspected not his own heart till it betrayed him in the hour of temptation, and led him to deny his Lord. The warning to be deduced from this is, never to think we have a due knowledge of ourselves till we have been exposed to various kinds of temptation, and tried on every side. Integrity on one side of our character is no voucher for integrity on another. We cannot tell how we should act if brought under temptations different from those we have hitherto experienced. This thought should keep us humble. We are sinners, but we do not know how great. He alone knows Who died for our sins.

Thus much, then, we cannot but allow, that we do not know ourselves in those respects in which we have not been tried. But farther than this: what if we do not know ourselves even where we have been tried and found faithful? It is a remarkable circumstance, which has often been observed, that if we look to some of the most eminent saints of Scripture, we shall find their recorded errors in those parts of their duty, in which each had had most trial, and generally showed obedience most perfect. *Faithful* Abraham, through want of faith, denied his wife. Moses, the *meekest* of men, was excluded from the land of promise for a passionate word. The *wisdom* of Solomon was seduced to bow down to idols. Barnabas, again, the "son of consolation", had a sharp contention with Paul. — If, then, men who knew themselves better than we doubtless know ourselves, had so many hidden infirmities about them,

even in those parts of their character which were most free from blame, what are we to think of ourselves? And if our very virtues be defiled with imperfection, what must be the unknown multiplied circumstances of evil which aggravate the guilt of our sins? This is a third presumption against us.

Think of this too: No one begins to examine himself, and to pray to know himself, but he finds within him an abundance of faults, which before were either entirely, or almost entirely unknown to him. That this is so, we learn from the written lives of good men, and our own experience of others. And hence it is that the best men are ever the most humble, for, having a higher standard of excellence in their minds than others have, and knowing themselves better, they see somewhat of the breadth and depth of their own sinful nature, and are shocked and frightened at themselves. The generality of men cannot understand this; and if at times the habitual self-condemnation of religious men breaks out into words, they think it arises from affectation, or from a strange, distempered state of mind, or from accidental melancholy or disquiet. Whereas the confession of a good man against himself is really a witness against all thoughtless persons who hear it, and a call on them to examine their own hearts. Doubtless, the more we examine ourselves, the more imperfect and ignorant shall we find ourselves to be.

Still, the full manifestation of our secret faults is reserved for another world. And at the last day, who can tell the affright and horror of a man

who lived to himself on earth, indulging his own evil will, following his own chance notions of truth and falsehood, shunning the cross and the reproach of Christ, when his eyes are at length opened before the throne of God! It is a serious question, then, for us to entertain, whether we are not now living a life of self-deceit, and thinking far more comfortably of our spiritual state than we have a right to do.

Self-knowledge does not come as a matter of course. It implies an effort and a work. As well may we suppose that the knowledge of the languages comes by nature, as that acquaintance with our own heart is natural. The very effort of steadily reflecting is itself painful to many; not to speak of the difficulties of reflecting correctly. To ask ourselves why we do this or that, to take account of the principles which govern us; to see whether we act for conscience' sake or from some lower inducement is painful to us. We are busy, and what leisure time we have we readily devote to a less severe and wearisome employment.

And then comes in our self-love. We hope the best. This saves us the trouble of examining. Self-love answers for our safety. We think it sufficient caution to allow for certain possible unknown faults at the utmost, and to take them into the reckoning when we balance our account with our conscience: whereas, if the truth were known to us, we should find we had nothing but debts, and those greater than we can conceive, and ever increasing.

And this favorable judgment of ourselves will

especially prevail if we have the misfortune to have uninterrupted health and high spirits. Health of body and mind is a great blessing, if we can bear it; but unless chastened by watchings and fastings (II. Cor. XI. 27.), it will commonly seduce a man into the notion that he is much better than he really is. When a man's spirits are high he is pleased with everything, and with himself especially. He can act with vigor and promptness, and he mistakes this mere constitutional energy for spiritual strength. He is cheerful and contented, and he mistakes this for spiritual peace. In short, he is in a dream, from which nothing could have saved him except deep humility, and nothing will ordinarily rouse him except sharp affliction.

Next, we must consider the force of habit. Conscience at first warns us against sin; but if we disregard it, it soon ceases to upbraid us; and thus sins once known become secret sins. It seems then, and this is a startling reflection, that the more guilty we are, the less we know it; for the oftener we sin, the less we are distressed at it. Do we not, on reflection, recollect instances in our experiences of ourselves, of gradually forgetting things to be wrong, which once shocked us? — Such is the force of habit. By it, for instance, we live in self-indulgent habits, eat and drink more than is right; much less do we think of simplicity of manners and abstinence as religious duties. So again, the duty of stated private prayer. At first it is omitted with compunction, but soon with indifference. But it is not less a sin, because we do not feel it to be such. Habit has made it a secret sin.

To the force of habit must be added that of custom. Every age has its wrong ways; and these have such influences that even good men are unconsciously misled by them. The most religious persons, unless they are specially watchful, will feel the sway of the fashion of their age, and suffer from it. Yet their ignorance of the mischief does not change the nature of their sin; sin it is still, only custom makes it a secret sin.

These remarks may impress upon us the difficulty of knowing ourselves aright, and the consequent danger to which we are exposed of speaking peace to our souls when there is no peace. Without self-knowledge we have no root in ourselves personally; we may endure for a time, but under temptation or affliction our virtue will not last. To think of these things and to be alarmed is the first step towards safety. To be at ease is to be unsafe. We must know what the evil of a sin is hereafter, if we do not learn it here.

God give us the grace to choose the pain of present repentance, before the wrath to come!

Evening Meditation.

VI.

On the Importance of Salvation.

"What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" — Matth. XVI. 26.

That our present life is short and uncertain; that we are on all sides exposed to accidents, any one of which may, in a moment, separate us from all

that we love and possess upon earth ; that, should we even escape all the perils of life, old age will, in a few years, inevitably dissolve this our earthly frame — these are familiar truths. If we strive to forget them, our efforts are in vain : death incessantly stalks before us, meets us in the midst of business and diversion, and reminds us, in language not to be mistaken, that the shaft which so often strikes those around us, must very soon strike us also.

What is the design of Providence in thus frequently reminding us of our mortality? It is, to counteract the charm by which the objects of this world delude and enchant us : it is to convince us that that which we must so soon leave, is unworthy of our solicitude ; it is to induce us to direct all our attention to securing that which is beyond the reach of death. Unfortunately, however, to the greater part of mankind these admonitions are sent in vain. From whatever cause it proceeds, certain it is, that the greater part of mankind come to the borders of eternity utterly destitute of that provision which it was the sole business of their lives to make. Earth and its toys have incessantly amused them, and while for the acquisitions that passed away no efforts have been wanting, for those possessions which alone are permanent, none have been exerted.

To prevent so fatal an error in our conduct is the end which we propose to attain by this meditation, and for this reason we shall devote it to that most important of all affairs — our salvation. Our salvation is the most important, it is our only affair.

The whole life of the greatest part of mankind passes away in the pursuit of the transitory goods of this world, without thinking seriously on eternity, or attending properly to the grand affair of salvation. In spite of religion and all its maxims, the care of temporal affairs is the most serious occupation of our life. It is only for the conerns of the soul that we are idle and inactive; we are careful, assiduous and vigilant for all the rest. Nothing discourages us in the pursuit of our worldly interest; pride, fatigues, perplexities, labors, hazards, the intrigues of rivals, in short, nothing can shake our resolution; but when we are to labor for the salvation of the soul, and contend for a happy eternity, alas, we are feeble, cold and indifferent, though there is nothing we should undertake with greater fervor, since, of all affairs, the affair of salvation is the most important. It is such, that if it alone succeeds, though we should fail of success in every other affair, we shall be completely happy; and if it alone should miscarry, though we should be fortunate in all the rest, we shall be entirely and eternally unhappy. Hence Christ Our Lord says in the gospel, "What will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matth. XVI. 26.)

To save your soul is the capital point for you; as for the rest, though you should live here in sufferings, in misery and contempt, though you should be stripped of all your worldly possessions, though you should be without friends, accused, condemned, persecuted as the scorn and outcast of all men, all this is nothing if you at length arrive

at the happy term of salvation, because you will then find a glory that will amply indemnify you for all the disgrace of the world, a glory infinite, a glory immortal, a glory without end. You will then find a treasure which will amply repay you for all the miseries of life, for you will possess God Himself, Who will be your inexhaustible treasure in the kingdom of heaven.

But oh, how utterly repugnant are these reflections to the world at large! In the world, the man who applies himself with earnestness to the great affair of his salvation, is beheld with a feeling of pity and contempt. The finger of ridicule is pointed at him, and his conduct is stigmatized as the effect of a weak or gloomy mind. Thus it is that the first of sciences is undervalued in the world; thus is this best and noblest of human occupations that which is the least regarded and pursued.

What a deplorable blindness! Consult reason, consult religion, consult your own conscience: what will your condition be if you lose your own soul? Ask the rich man in the gospel, who at the sad moment of his death was buried in the flames of hell, what did all the false happiness of the world avail him, when it was followed by everlasting misery? Learn true wisdom at the expense of so many other reprobates, who are now condemned to eternal torments; they can well instruct you, as they are fully convinced of their own folly by their own woeful experience. Approach now any one of those who, while they neglected the affair of their salvation, drew upon themselves, by their

talents, their wealth, their success, the envy and admiration of mankind. Approach, and ask them what are now their sentiments with regard to salvation. They are counselors not likely to deceive. Bitter experience has, too late, made them wise. Their unanimous answer has been given in the Book of Wisdom: "We have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us. We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known. What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow, and as a ship that passeth through the waves: whereof when it is gone the trace cannot be found." (Wisd. V. 6—10.) From the testimony of the dead learn the emptiness of the concerns of this life, listening to their language from the inspired writer. Of the Blessed they say, "These are they, whom we had sometime in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor: behold, now they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints." (Wisd. V. 3—5.)

But if this voice of the dead, this adjuration from the grave, be insufficient to arouse you to a sense of the importance of salvation, learn in what estimation the same is regarded by the God Who redeemed you, by the God of all knowledge and truth.

From eternity your salvation has occupied a place in His divine mind. With a view to this He gave you existence. In subordination to this He created the universe with all its magnificent array. Great as He is, insignificant as is man, our salvation is not beneath His most tender solicitude. The utmost effort of Omnipotence itself has been exerted to promote it. Yes, for us men and our salvation it was that the Son of God became man. For our salvation He became subject to pain and poverty, hardships and contempt. For our salvation He offered up all the actions of His life. Our salvation it was which drew from Him a flood of tears and a sweat of blood; it bound Him to the pillar and crowned him with thorns. For it He bore the heavy cross upon His mangled shoulders, gave His hands and feet to be pierced and underwent the torments of death. Christian soul, a God suffering, bleeding, dying for man's salvation! Man thoughtless, careless, insensible with regard to his own salvation! Which is the greater subject of astonishment? What shall we conclude from this striking contrast on the subject of salvation between the sentiments of God and man? What, but that God should demand back at the hands of His creature all that He has done and suffered for him in vain? What, but that God, Whose secret judgments are most terrible, should suffer the negligent Christian to proceed on his way, in which, in spite of so many admonitions, so many and so powerful helps, he has chosen to walk; that He should suffer him to continue in his torpor, till final impenitence puts the consumma-

tion to his guilt, and an unhappy death closes a sinful life.

Such is the inevitable consequence of a life spent in forgetfulness of the great affair of salvation; such the judgment which is daily exemplified upon numbers of those who fall around us. Is it not true, then, that of all affairs, our salvation is the most important, and, indeed, our only affair?

That salvation is our only affair, that is, the only affair that deserves our constant care and application, is a truth frequently repeated in Holy Scripture. It is recommended to us by Our Divine Redeemer as the "one thing necessary" that should engage our attention; it alone can be properly called our own affair. Our other concerns regard those who are to benefit by us, or to inherit the fruits of our industry, but this entirely regards ourselves. Our other affairs may be useful, and may bring us some advantage and profit, but this is an affair of absolute and indispensable necessity; it is an affair of such moment and importance, that how fortunate soever we may be otherwise in all our enterprises, we not only gain nothing, but our All is lost for ever if we do not succeed herein. This is the affair with which God has charged each person in particular, as of first and only importance. It was not necessary that we should be created; the world was long without us, and would have still subsisted though we never had been in existence. But as it pleased the Almighty God to give us a being, so He could not but ordain us for some end, and for what end more glorious than to serve Him here on earth and to enjoy Him eternally in heaven here-

after? All our actions, then, should be performed with this view, and directed to this end; this is the business which should occupy us morning, noon and night; this is an employment proper for all hours. "In whatsoever state or condition you are," says St. Ambrose, "be always attentive to the salvation of your soul, and take care to insure for yourself eternal happiness." Be not too solicitous about a multiplicity of affairs which, properly speaking, deserve not your attention; at least, let not too much anxiety disquiet your mind, except for your salvation. Endeavor each day to make progress in virtue; pay every attention to your immortal soul, that precious talent which God has committed to your care, that valuable treasure which Christ has purchased with His sacred Blood; that part of you, the most valuable, the most noble, and consequently the most worthy of all your care and attention; spare no pains to preserve and save it; abandon the rest to Providence. This is a personal affair for you; in a word, it is your *only* affair, your only business in this world.

Must all other affairs be therefore abandoned and neglected? No; but they must be all referred to the great and important affair of your salvation. This must be the centre of all your actions, the end of all your pursuits, and the ruling principle that should influence you in all your undertakings; so that when it is said your salvation is your only affair, it is not meant that you are to neglect your other duties. It is but the affirmation, that in the management of all your other affairs you are to have your salvation always in view, to aim at it in

all your pursuits, and to make it your chief affair and principal study. You are to discharge the respective duties of your station with this view, and with the intention of pleasing God, and of being subservient to the designs of His Providence.

To reduce this consideration to practice, consider how your daily occupations are to tend to your salvation. Although the greater part of your life is spent in the duties of your calling, you can sanctify them by referring all your actions to God, living, acting and thinking in His presence. This may be done in the following manner:

In the morning, when we awake, we should accustom ourselves to think first of God, or something connected with His service; and at night let Him close our eyes, and let our sleep be necessary and healthful, not idle and expensive of time, nor beyond the appointed hour.

Let all the intervals or void spaces of time be employed in prayer, reading, meditating, permitted recreation and offices of mutual friendliness, ever remembering so to work in our calling, as to work out the end of this calling.

Never engage in conversation, or undertake any trifling employment merely to pass away time; for every day well spent may become a "day of salvation," and time rightly employed is an "acceptable time." And remember, the time you trifle away was given you to repent in, to pray for pardon of sins, to work out your salvation, to do the work of grace, to lay up for the day of judgment a treasure of good works.

In the midst of your daily work often retire to

God in short prayers and ejaculations. You can thereby make up the want of those larger portions of time which, it may be, you desire for devotion, and in which, you think, other persons have the advantage of you. Thus you will reconcile the demands of duty with the work of your salvation.

Avoid curiosity, and all inquiry into things that do not concern you. Mixing with things and affairs that do not concern us is employing our time to no good of ours, and therefore not in order to our salvation.

Do not "the work of God negligently" and idly: let not your heart be with the world when your hands are lifted up in prayer. In honoring God and doing His work put forth all your strength; "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God . . . with thy whole strength." (Mark XII. 30.)

Examine your conscience every evening. The particular examen during the day will greatly aid you therein.

Let all these things be done prudently and moderately, without scruples and vexations.

These are common and simple rules. The reflections from which they proceed are such as you have heard again and again, and which are continually pressed on your attention. You know their importance, you know the awful consequences they involve. Yet, with all this knowledge, with all this conviction some still run blindly to perdition in the practical desertion of the principles which they profess. And whence is this? It is because they know these truths as if they knew them not. It is because they never suffer them to make due

impression. To rouse *you* to the realization of their importance is the object of this retreat.

"Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation." (II. Cor. VI. 2.) Make up your account with God. Make amends for your carelessness. Retire from the levities and vanities to which you have hitherto clung. Act logically: if you believe yourself created for another and better world, if you deem salvation worthy of your labor, let your first attention be directed to its attainment. Let it enter into all your calculations; let it determine and regulate all your actions. In a word, in all that you plan, in all that you undertake, let your life be regulated by that truth of truths, "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matth. XVI. 26.)

PRAYER.

O Eternal God! Who hast created me to know, love and serve Thee in this world, and to possess Thee eternally in the next: take from me all slothfulness in Thy service, that I may work out my salvation with fear and trembling, and may enter into the eternal joy of heaven after leaving this vale of tears. Until that supreme moment let the love of Thy mercy, and the fear and dread of Thy majesty make me careful and inquisitive to search Thy will, and diligent to perform it, and to persevere in the practices of a holy life even till the last of my days. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Points of Meditation for next Morning.

VII.

Recapitulation of the preceding subject.

1. *My salvation is my own personal affair.* — It is I, I alone, to whom is left the choice of its attainment. I can successfully achieve it, and it concerns me exclusively. "For what things a man shall sow, those also he shall reap." (Gal. VI. 8.) It is, then, my personal exertion which I must employ, and that shall be rewarded. God, Who created me without my assistance, will not save me without my co-operation. (*St. Augustine.*) — Moreover, my salvation concerns my supreme happiness. The same as there is a sinful and harmful self-love there is also one demanded by religion and reason.

2. *My salvation is an affair as difficult as it is necessary.* — By the aid of divine grace I must be continually intent on denying myself. This is so difficult, that God Himself warns us, "How narrow is the gate, and how strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it." (Matth. VII. 14.) We must die to self, in order to live for Christ. "The kingdom of God suffereth violence." (Matth. XI. 12.) But I must work out my salvation, if I do not wish to perish for ever.

3. *My salvation is an affair that permits of no delay.* — To achieve it, I have many things to accomplish. How many faults remain for me to overcome, how many vices to abandon, how many virtues to acquire! — And how much time have I to do all this? — To-day I begin: and to-morrow, perhaps, I must already obey the summons to eternity!

Second Day.

Meditation during the Forenoon.

VIII.

Mortal Sin.

"Know thou, and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee, to have left the Lord thy God." — Jerem. II. 19.

Mortal sin is so called because it kills the soul of the sinner by depriving it of the life of grace, making it liable to eternal death and damnation. Mortal sin is of all things the most base, the most vile, the most odious, the most ruinous, the most detrimental and the most abominable. It is an abomination in its own nature, and a desolation in its effects. Nothing is more offensive or more injurious to God, nothing more destructive or pernicious to the sinner. Its malice, its enormity and its dismal consequences are such as render it the greatest of all evils, and the most deserving of our hatred and contempt. There appears something so excessively monstrous and foul in every circumstance of mortal sin, that neither thoughts can distinctly represent, nor words sufficiently express it.

It is evident that the grievousness of an injury always rises in proportion to the superior dignity of the person offended above the person offending; and therefore to comprehend the greatness of the offence we must consider not only what it is in itself, but also who it is that is offended, and who it is that offends. We are to consider, first, if the person offended be of exalted dignity and merit:

secondly, if the offender be very low, mean and contemptible; and thirdly, if the offence be of its own nature very provoking.

It is from this clear principle, generally acknowledged, that we may judge of the atrociousness of the injury done to God by mortal sin, because all the aforesaid circumstances which are capable of aggravating an offence, meet together in the highest degree; for it is God Himself, whose dignity is infinite, and whose majesty is supreme, that is insulted and attacked, and that by a vile, miserable creature, by a mere handful of dust and ashes, and by a most grievous offence. Mortal sin strikes directly at God's infinite goodness, abuses His infinite mercy, defies His infinite justice, and provokes His vengeance. Malice, insolence, treachery, rebellion, perfidiousness, ingratitude and a barefaced contempt of His divine majesty are its inseparable attendants and properities. By mortal sin a poor reptile of the earth impudently raises his head against heaven, daringly wages war against the King of all glory, audaciously attacks the supreme Being, presumptuously affronts his Lord, God and Creator, and impiously tramples upon His most sacred law. By mortal sin we perfidiously violate the covenant made at baptism, sacrilegiously break the most sacred ties of fidelity, and, lastly, enter into a league with hell, and subject ourselves to satan. By mortal sin we repay the goodness of our Heavenly Father and most bountiful benefactor with the basest ingratitude, and in return for the many signal benefits, favors, graces and blessings conferred on us, in preference

to thousands of others, we renew the passion and death of Jesus Christ, crucify Him over again, and trample under foot His most precious Blood, as St. Paul expresses it. In fine, mortal sin implies a barefaced contempt of the living God, as it is a blind preference of some created object, or criminal pleasure, to the eternal and sovereign God. By every mortal sin that the sinner is guilty of he turns his back to his best friend, he forsakes his merciful Redeemer, he parts with his Heavenly Father, to feed, like the prodigal son, on the husks of swine ; he abandons his Creator for the sake of a creature ; he quits the fountain of living water to plunge into a muddy cistern, as Scripture says : he barters heaven for earth, and more perversely than the Jews who preferred Barabbas to Jesus, he gives the devil himself the preference before God, as Tertullian remarks. Nay, as St. Augustine says, by every mortal sin that he commits, he sells his soul to the devil, and for his salary and recompense he receives nothing but a momentary satisfaction, a brutal pleasure, a filthy delight, a sordid, perishable interest. These are the idols which the unhappy sinner erects on the altar of his heart and adores and worships there to the great contempt and injury of the living God. This is what made the Lord complain through His prophet, "I have brought up children, and exalted them : but they have despised me" (Isai. I. 2.); I have left nothing undone to purchase their affections and gain their hearts, but they have dishonored me. They have chosen to forfeit my grace and friendship rather than quit their favorite sins and renounce their evil ways.

Are you then surprised that the Lord, being thus despised, insulted and outraged by the crying malice of mortal sin, has from time to time manifested His indignation and hatred to it by inflicting the most severe punishments on the unhappy offenders even in this life? The universal deluge, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha by a shower of fire and sulphur from the heavens, with many other visible judgments recorded in Holy Writ, are intended to impress us with this truth; but nothing demonstrates the horrid outrage and injury committed against the infinite majesty of God by mortal sin, nothing shows the great hatred He bears unto it more clearly, than the passion and death of the world's Redeemer. Here we see that one mortal sin of disobedience was so odious, so offensive, so injurious, and so provoking to the Almighty, that the gates of heaven were thereby shut against mankind, and that nothing less than the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, was able to make condign satisfaction for it, and to atone for it in the rigor of justice. It is from the bitterness of the remedy, says St. Bernard, that we way form some idea of the baseness and enormity of mortal sin, and truly judge how horrid and abominable it must be in the sight of God. And really, were it not infinitely horrid, odious and detestable to the last degree, it would not oblige the great God, Who is so prone to mercy, and Whose very nature is goodness, to condemn to unquenchable flames a soul made after His own image and likeness, created to enjoy Him for ever, and ransomed with the Most Precious Blood of His beloved and only-begotten Son.

Such, notwithstanding God's mercy, is the punishment reserved in the next life for the soul that departs this life in the state of a single mortal sin unrepented; for, as Holy Scripture assures us, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. VI. 23.), the death of the soul here, and eternal damnation hereafter. Hence the prophet Ezechiel says, "The soul that sinneth, the same shall die." (Ezech. XVIII. 20.) Though incorruptible in nature, and immortal in substance, the soul dies in the sight of God, and becomes more loathsome and offensive than a putrefying carcass, from the very instant it loses God and His grace by mortal sin; for as it is the soul of man that gives life to the body, and consequently, as the body dies when the soul departs from it, so, in like manner, the soul dies when it is deprived by mortal sin of the supernatural life of sanctifying grace. This made St. Augustine say, "A sinner in the state of mortal sin carries a corpse within himself wherever he goes, inasmuch as he carries a dead soul in a living body, buried therein as in a grave, and exposed every instant to the danger of being buried in hell." And the holy doctor continues, "Oh, that I were able to raise such unfortunate sinners to the happy life of God's grace, and to make them as solicitous for the preservation of the supernatural life of their souls, as they generally are for the preservation of the transitory life of their perishable bodies." But, alas, everyone dreads the death of his body; few dread the death of their souls. Mortal man labors incessantly to ward off his corporal death, though he knows it to be unavoidable;

and in the meanwhile he takes little or no pains to avoid mortal sin, though it is the greatest and most dreadful misfortune that can ever happen to any one in this world.

To be more fully convinced hereof we need but consider, that as long as a person is in the happy state of grace, his soul is a favorite of heaven, an object of God's complaceny, and a living temple and sanctuary of the Holy Ghost; it is embellished with His Heavenly gifts and blessings, enriched with virtues and merits, enlivened with faith, animated with hope, inflamed with divine love, and resembles Jesus Christ by the happy union it has with Him, as iron, when it is penetrated and inflamed with fire, resembles fire itself, and glows and shines with its heat and brightness. But no sooner is mortal sin committed, when the soul is rendered a sink of filth and corruption, and a receptacle of satan; it immediately loses all its former beauty and splendor, fervor and lustre; is stripped of all its rich and valuable ornaments; is robbed of all its spiritual treasures; is disfigured, profaned and polluted. All its accumulated merits are instantly swept away much after the same manner that a plentiful harvest is at once swept away by a sudden inundation; for as the prophet Ezechiel says, "If the just man turn himself away from his justice, and do iniquity according to all the abominations which the wicked man useth to work, shall he live? All his justice, which he had done, shall not be remembered: in the prevarication by which he hath prevaricated, and in his sin which he hath committed, in them he shall

die." (Ezech. XVIII. 24.) The unfortunate sinner, therefore, who departs this life in the state of mortal sin unrepented, may bid an everlasting farewell to heaven, into which nothing defiled can enter; he may bid an eternal farewell to the beatific vision of the ever-blessed Trinity; hell is to be the place of his abode for ever and ever; infernal spirits are to be his perpetual companions, incomprehensible torments are to be his everlasting inheritance; to burn with merciless devils in unquenchable flames of fire is to be his portion for a never ending eternity.

Such are the dismal consequences of mortal sin; which clearly proves how offensive and injurious it must be to God, and how detrimental and destructive to the sinner himself. Therefore, if we have had the misfortune, at any time of our past life, to fall into mortal sin, let us humble ourselves before God, and incessantly use our best endeavors to regain the love and friendship of our Creator, and to recover the valuable treasure of sanctifying grace by a true and sincere repentance. Let us resolve from this instant rather to suffer the most cruel death than ever to be guilty of a mortal sin in thought, word or deed for the future. Let the fruit of this meditation on mortal sin be — never to *live* in a state in which we would be afraid to *die*.

PRAYER.

Prostrate before Thee, O Father of mercies and God of all consolation, I most profoundly beseech Thee to finish what Thou hast begun in me. Thou hast shown me the evil of sin: grant me, I beseech

Thee, from this hour the grace to avoid it, and to devote the remainder of my life to Thy service, till I have the happiness to see and contemplate, to possess and enjoy Thee in the sacred mansions of eternal bliss. Amen.

Spiritual Reading.

IX.

Religion in Daily Life.

There are many things in our daily life to distract us in our prayers and spiritual exercises, and to turn away our thoughts from the important business of our salvation. There is the duty of fulfilling the obligations of our state of life, there are the cares, the troubles, the anxieties which come to every one, and which are to so many, occasions of sin. And the question naturally suggests itself, how are these things to be managed? On the one hand we cannot lay aside our business — we were born to work and work we must — we must take things as we find them, we must meet the world as it comes. But, on the other hand, with all this, we must save our souls; if we do not succeed in that, the gain of the whole world will profit us nothing. Now, how are these things to be reconciled?

When Our Lord said to St. Peter, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught," the Apostle replied, "Master, we have labored all night, and have taken nothing: but at Thy word I will let down the net." (Luke V. 4.—5.) Perhaps you have often made St. Peter's complaint your

own, suppose you were also to make your own the remainder of his speech? Having declared that you have labored a long time, and effected little or nothing, suppose you were now to say, "For the future I will do my work in the name of the Lord; I will put it under his protection and do it for His sake. I will begin to make religion a part of my daily life, to take supernatural views of things, to put before me supernatural ends."

Make your daily life religious, put a supernatural stamp upon your acts, that they may not serve only the purposes of this life, but may also pass current in the kingdom of grace, and purchase the treasures of eternal glory.

There are a great many persons, and by no means badly disposed persons, who maintain a sharp distinction between their worldly lives and their religious observances. Many a man uses his religion precisely as he uses his Sunday coat. It is far too good for everyday wear; he puts it by carefully all the week, and uses it only on Sunday. Now all this is very prudent in the matter of clothes, but it is quite a mistake in the matter of religion, because religion, to be of any service, must be something that is not put off and on, something that makes a part of our very selves. We have our soul to save on weekdays as well as on Sundays; and when the Church consecrates one day specially to God, she by no means intends to leave room for the conclusion that the other six belong to the world, the flesh, or the devil. All our days must be holy.

First, we must make them holy by avoiding at least mortal sin, if we have the slightest wish to

avoid hell. But we must try and do more — we must not only avoid evil, we must also do good. We are apt to draw a wide distinction between those of God's servants whom we call saints, and ordinary Christians like ourselves. And a wide distinction there undoubtedly is. But let not the distinction blind us to the common likeness that must exist between the saints and our poor weak selves, if we ever enter heaven. We all hope to be saved; but has it ever struck you that the only claim you will have to heaven is the title that you, too, are a saint? There will be no human being in heaven who is not a saint, and whose sanctity has not been attained in this mortal life. Hence, if you really wish to avoid hell and gain heaven, there is just one way — become a saint.

Now, let us see what this means. What is your idea of a saint? In the first place you know that you are far from being like the saints of whom you read, and you have a vague impression that in order to be a saint you would have to do something extraordinary, that you would have to break up your settled course of life, lay aside your worldly pursuits, spend on your knees in prayer the time you now spend working for your daily bread. Perhaps in addition to this you have certain floating notions of hair shirts and disciplines, of fasts carried to the verge of starvation, and of austerities that frighten this cowardly body of ours. It may be too, that you are under the impression that it would be essential to fall into ecstasy, to see a vision, to work a miracle. All these elements enter vaguely into the popular notion of a saint. Now, suppose

you found that none of these things are absolutely essential to sanctity. Suppose you found that none of these things, ecstasies and visions, are essential, and that no one is bound, on the peril of his salvation, to work a miracle. Suppose you found that, though fasting and austerities are admirable means of sanctity, yet you can be, in your measure, a saint without carrying them to any extraordinary length. Suppose you found that you could be, to all intents and purposes, a saint, without making any violent change in your condition of life. Suppose, in short, that you could make yourself a saint by just doing the work you have to do every day, if you only did it rightly — would not this encourage you to begin at once and try to be a saint on such easy conditions? — Now, this is just the case. The saints, however they differed in gifts and graces, all showed one thing in common — they did rightly, they did for God, the duties of their state of life, whatever it happened to be.

This is the way of it. First, you must keep free from mortal sin. Next, you must daily beg of God the grace you stand in need of, and lastly you must do your daily acts for God. Offer up to Him your daily work, your trials, your troubles, the crosses and annoyances you meet with, everything you do, and say, and think, and suffer, through the infinite merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ. If a person would do only this; if, being free from mortal sin, he made this offering every morning and evening, and renewed it during the day whenever it came to his mind, he would, without any trouble, be advancing in sanctity every moment of his life.

Our Blessed Lord has laid down for us a very simple rule of life. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke IX. 23.) From the fact that Our Lord uses the word "daily" it is evident that He does not mean any extraordinary cross, but just such crosses as daily life is able to bring. In his dealings with the world, a man learns nothing sooner than that he cannot always have his own way. He must deny himself. Why, then, will he not do for God what he has to do, in spite of himself, for a world which can neither give him peace here nor heaven hereafter?

It is the same thing in the matter of crosses. A man may, in the perversity of his heart, refuse to be a disciple of Christ at all: does he thereby escape his cross? Oh, no! The troubles of life, the cares and the annoyances which we call crosses, will come to him as well as to his Christian neighbors, and he must bear them. All his life he has had to deny himself, and to take up his cross; but he would not do the last and easiest part, he would not follow Jesus, he would not put himself in the state of grace, and do these things for God. And at the bitter end he will find himself in hell; and he will find that others, his friends and neighbors, who did the labors he did, who bore the crosses he bore, who worked, perhaps, by his side, in the same pursuits or in the same workshop, these, because they lived for God, will be receiving the reward of their works in everlasting happiness.

If hitherto you have been careless about doing your daily duties for God, about directing the

intention of all your acts to Him, resolve to begin now. Make a resolution in the presence of God that for the future you will, at your morning and evening prayers, and as often during the day as the thought occurs to you, offer up to God, through the merits of Jesus, your thoughts, words and actions. The infinite merits of Our Saviour are at our disposal if we only will use them. Through them, our hope and salvation, we can make our own poor lives meritorious, and make our every act a preparation for the solemn, inevitable hour when we shall be judged according to our works.

Afternoon Conference.

X.

On the Virtue of Humility.

Divines distinguish two kinds of humility: the one of the spirit and understanding, the other of the heart and will. Humility of the spirit and understanding makes us know and acknowledge that of ourselves we are nothing, and that we owe all that we have to God's pure bounty. It does not consist, as is generally imagined, in placing ourselves beneath what we are in reality, but in doing ourselves the exactest and strictest justice, and in clearly seeing and knowing our own indigence and miseries. Humility of the heart and will is founded in a feeling sense and an experimental knowledge of our own weakness. It makes us sincerely despise ourselves in our hearts, and willing to be despised by others, from a conviction that we are deserving of contempt.

How few persons shall we find who are habitually in this interior disposition! How few are there who continually carry in their hearts this intimate conviction of their own insufficiency and unworthiness? There is nothing in which we more frequently deceive ourselves. We believe, with a speculative faith, that all creatures are nothing of themselves, and that all glory should be given to God alone; but in practice we do not conform our sentiments with this belief. Few comprehend rightly what humility is. "Many grasp at the shadow", says St. Jerome, "but few embrace the substance of humility." Many are humble in their words and in their exterior conduct, but inwardly they are the dupes of a subtle refined pride, which they artfully disguise and conceal under the mask of an apparent humility and the cloak of a feigned modesty. The humility of most persons goes no farther than their understanding; it does not reach their heart and affection. Yet humility of the understanding will avail them little without humility of the heart and will. The evil spirits themselves understand and know full well their own baseness, abjection and indignity, but they want humility of the heart and will. True Christian humility, says St. Bernard, resides partly in the understanding and partly in the will. It is a virtue, says the holy doctor, by which a man, from a true knowledge of himself, is contemptible in his own eyes. It springs from a true knowledge of our own infirmities and imperfections, and makes us undervalue the judgments of men, and disregard the empty praises and applauses of the world.

There is an infused humility, which is obtained chiefly through the channel of contemplation and devout, humble prayer, and there is an acquired humility, which is obtained by repeated acts of humiliation. Infused humility enlightens the soul in all its views, and makes it clearly see and feel its own absolute indigence. One ray of this heavenly light discovers to us our own nothingness much better than all our study and reflections on ourselves can do, as one ray of the sun enlightens the earth much better than all the stars together. St. Bernard, speaking of acquired humility, says, "If we do not exercise humiliations we cannot attain to humility; for humiliation is the road to humility, and produces it, as meekness in suffering, tribulations and injuries produces patience."

In truth, we shall find many pressing motives and inducements to embrace all kind of humiliations as due to us, if we do but take a close view of ourselves, and consider, with St. Bernard, what we have been, what we are by nature, what we are become by sin, what we should be by co-operating with God's grace, and what kind of beings we are to be hereafter, when death shall reduce us to dust and ashes. Everything preaches humility to us on the one hand, and gratitude to our Creator on the other. He alone is the origin, the term and centre of all that is good, and consequently all honor, praise and glory are due to Him alone; we owe all to Him, and have nothing of ourselves but ignorance, weakness, misery and sin. Of our own nature we are the very abstract of frailty, and an unfathomed abyss of corruption, capable of nothing

when left to ourselves, but rushing headlong into all kinds of disorders. All the good qualities that we may be perhaps supposed to have, whether of nature or of grace, are the pure gifts of God, and the immediate effects of His goodness. We have nothing of our own but sin. This, indeed, and this alone can we call our own. Whatever we have beyond sin, is the gift of our Maker.

What can be more humiliating? What pride can hold out against this reflection? We are sure that we have offended the Lord our God, and we are not sure that our sorrow for our sins has had all the qualities that are necessary to entitle us to the benefit of divine mercy, or that our penance has been proportioned to the greatness of our offences. We are marching incessantly towards the grave, uncertain what will be our lot in the other world. Should not this dreadful uncertainty alarm us? Is it not a just ground to make us profoundly humble? Even though we were assured that our past sins were all forgiven; though we were assured of being at present in the state of grace, still we can have no manner of assurance that we shall persevere unto the end and die in the state of grace. There can be no security here on earth, says St. Bernard, after the first angel has been lost in heaven, the first man in paradise, and Judas, the apostle, lost in the school of Jesus Christ. However good we may be, we may still change, and alas, to change no more for eternity.

After all these considerations, how deplorable must our insensibility be, if we entertain sentiments of pride and vain-glory, or haughtily prefer

ourselves in word, or in thought even to the greatest sinner on earth?

After having considered that nothing is more reasonable or more just than that we should be profoundly humble, it yet remains to prove that nothing is more pleasing to God, or more necessary to our salvation, than that we should be humble.

Do but open the sacred volumes, and you will be convinced of the malice and pernicious effects of pride, and of the benefits and salutary effects of humility. Humility is the first example that our Blessed Saviour has given us, the first lesson He has taught us, the favorite virtue of His whole life, the most constant maxim of His law. His life, says St. Augustine, was a chain of virtues, and one continued series of good works; but from the time of His birth in the stable of Bethlehem unto the hour of His death on Calvary He proposed humility in a special manner for our instruction. This made St. Bernard remark, "O humility, humility, how precious, how amiable, and how dear shouldst thou be to us after such an example, since the eternal Son of the living God was pleased to be incarnated with thee, and to expire in thy arms on the cross!"

Nothing renders us more acceptable in the sight of God than humility. It was humility that rendered the Blessed Virgin Mary so acceptable in the sight of the Most Holy Trinity, and raised her to the eminent dignity of Mother of God. Hence it is that she attributes to her humility alone all the signal favors and blessings that were bestowed

upon her, as appears from her own canticle of praise and thanksgiving, in which she says expressly, "Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid, behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." (Luke I. 48.)

Without this humility the other means of salvation become useless and unprofitable. It is from it that prayer, which is the ordinary means to obtain God's grace, derives its virtue and efficacy. Penance, which is the last resource of the sinner, can have no force unless his heart be humbled and touched with a profound sentiment of his own unworthiness, and the idea of the sovereign majesty of God Whom he offended. But if we are profoundly humble, and earnestly sue for grace and mercy, though our sins were so numerous as grains of sand on the sea shore, they will all be forgiven; for God can refuse no favor when true humility petitions for it. He retires from the proud, and stoops to the humble, as St. Augustine says. He resists the one, and gives grace in abundance to the other. We have a remarkable instance hereof in the proud pharisee and the humble publican mentioned in the gospel. The presuming pharisee was rejected, whilst the humble sinner became acceptable. Why so? Because, as St. Chrysostom observes, the virtues of the one were accompanied with pride, and the vices of the other were attended by humility. Such, then, is the wonderful force and efficacy of humility, that in one moment it can make a reprobate a saint, as on the contrary pride can in one moment make a just man a reprobate. How odious, then, must pride be in the sight of

God, and how amiable, how necessary must humility be! Without it no virtue can be acceptable; without it the whole fabric of spiritual life must inevitably fall to the ground, for it is the basis and foundation of every virtue, and the corner-stone of the spiritual edifice. He that does not build upon it builds on sand, and whatever may appear to be virtue is no more than a shadow, a phantom; for the grace of God, from whence every true virtue proceeds, is given only to the humble, and does not descend into a proud soul.

St. Cyprian therefore calls humility the root of all virtues, and the gate of religion; and St. Chrysostom says it is impossible to rise to the higher degrees of perfection without passing first through the lower, which consist in humility. St. Augustine compares perfection to a grand and stately edifice, which rises high in proportion as the foundation is laid low; so that virtue always increases in proportion to humility. The same holy doctor goes further, and asks, "What is the first thing in all religion? Humility. What is the second? Humility. What is the third? Humility. There is no other road to heaven; for as the sin of pride is the road to hell, the contrary virtue of humility must necessarily be the road to heaven." Wherefore, if we wish one day to enter into heaven, we must necessarily take a road quite different from that by which the apostate angels and our first parents have been led astray. We must, in a word, renounce and shun pride, and embrace the opposite virtue of humility. In vain do we expect to be of the number of the elect, and to inherit

heaven, unless we bear some resemblance to Our Lord and Master, who invites us, "Learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart." (Matth. XI. 29.)

Should we therefore, not conclude, that nothing is more reasonable, nothing more just, nothing more necessary, than that we should be profoundly humble both in spirit and heart? Let us frequently implore this virtue of God, saying with St. Augustine, "O Lord, teach me to know Thee, and to know myself"—to know Thee, that I may love and glorify Thee in all things; to know myself, that I may never ascribe anything to myself or my own merit.

Evening Meditation.

XI.

On Death.

"Death worketh in us." — II. Cor. IV. 12.

Death is an essential concomitant of our nature. "It is decreed for all men once to die." (Hebr. IX. 27.) Indeed, so hopeless is the escape from it, that we may say man, however reluctantly, has made his mind up to it, and silently acquiesced in what is inevitable. By faith we believe the other grand truths — judgment, hell, heaven; but we do not see them. Death we witness every day. The delusion of living long is common enough, but the expectation of living for ever is an error too gross to have ever entered the mind of man.

Since, then, death is so certain, so inevitably certain; since it is so surely coming, and there is

no hope or possibility to escape from it, let us for once weigh our own words, and see what it is when we say, "we must die". A lively thought of death has wrought a thousand conversions and changes of life: may it please God to work a change in us during this most important meditation.

It would seem that a coming event so awful, and at the same time so certain, should engross the whole attention of the rational being whom it concerns. The truth is that men, unable to blind themselves to the prospect, take refuge from the certainty of the event in its uncertainty; that is, they heed it not, because the time of its accomplishment is perhaps remote, and certainly undefined.

First: The time of death is, perhaps, remote. What chance does this aspect of death give us? Twenty, thirty, or perhaps fifty years. And what are these? If they appear something in prospect, view them in retrospect; examine them by the past. What are now those twenty, or thirty, or fifty years which were once before you, and are now behind you? They appeared long then: what are they now? Dwindled down to a point, they have scarcely marked a trace on the memory. The years to come are of the same nature; their other extremity, though indistinct to your eye, is not undefined or unfixed; while you, on your part, are continually hastening along, taking silently but rapidly year from year, till at last, while intent on the objects around you, you will startle to find yourself at the extremity which now seems so distant. You can, at will, conceive this. Imagination has that power

over the future, which memory has over the past. Let it transport you, then, to the spot, supposing the intervening years past, and you are immediately amid all the fearful realities of death just as if they were at this moment to occur.

Secondly: Remote or not, the time of death is certainly undefined. — Yes, but is this a motive of security to a rational being? Is it not rather the very reason of fear? For, what does it mean? — It means that there is not a single moment of life, in any stage of it, but may be the last; it means that any one of these instants, as it passes, may bring along death and all circumstances and consequences attendant upon it. Or is, perhaps, youth a security against death? Countless are the silent monitors how deceitful is the promise of youth: we pass and repass on the graves of the young. — Is middle age surer? Its full expanded frame, its settled maturity seem to promise better security and to diminish the risk; but death has there, too, frequent victims, and we have seen striking instances where middle age, uninterrupted health and a vigorous frame were no security, but emphatically proved to us that there is absolutely no period of life that does not verge on the grave. What, then, follows? — That it is the height of folly, not knowing the time of our death, fully aware that we may die at any moment, not to be always prepared for it. "If then thou shalt not watch, I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I shall come to thee." (Apoc. III. 3.)

Sooner or later, then, soon at the latest — for the longest life is short and fleet in ending — it will go

abroad that we are dying. Our turn will be come. Will that day come upon us unawares? — That we cease not both to fear death and to prepare for it, let us engage in the following considerations.

Happy the man who lives every day as if it were to be his last. Unhappy, on the other hand, is he that defers his preparation to his death-bed, and puts the never ending eternity on the poor chance of a late repentance, when the dulness and stupidity caused by his last illness scarcely allow of any serious application of his thoughts to this most important of all his concerns.

Nothing can be conceived more wretched, more dismal or more deplorable than the death of the wicked who, about to be cited before the awful tribunal of an injured God, have nothing to offer Him but a long train of crimes and disorders. If they look back into their past life, they find the good works they have done too inconsiderable when balanced with their multiplied sins. The remembrance of the graces, invitations and calls of heaven which they resisted; the many opportunities of storing up eternal treasures which they neglected; the talents and gifts of God which they misemployed; the holy sacraments which they abused — all these misdeeds set before their eyes such a dismal scene of woe, distress and confusion, that they now experience the truth of the words of the royal prophet, "The sorrows of death have encompassed me, and the perils of hell have found me." (Ps. CXIV. 3.) Their very prayers condemn and upbraid them with sloth and negligence. And what still adds misery to misery, the pains and agonies of

their sickness give them little or no leisure or ability to apply themselves seriously to the great work of a perfect conversion to God.—God, indeed, may show mercy to them at the last moment, for which reason we are not to form a rash judgment, nor pass sentence on any particular sinner; but is it credible that sinners who abuse God's mercy, and tempt Him by designing to live in sin and then to die in grace, should snatch heaven in a moment, when the best Christians with difficulty attain it in many years?

The just man, on the contrary, will have nothing of this to fear at the hour of his death, because he never fixed his happiness on worldly trifles, but raising his heart to God, was always faithful to His divine law. Standing on the verge of eternity, he is ready to meet death in the well-grounded hope of entering into the joy of his Lord. The assurance of a well-spent life; the merit of those virtues which his humility concealed from the eyes of men; the multitude of good works that surround him; the perfect conformity to the will of God, and other happy dispositions with which he closes his eyes and yields up his soul into his Creator's hands—all this makes him cheerful to leave this world, and welcome the happy hour that is to put an end to his trials and labors, and unite him to his God.

To impress the thought of death more deeply on our minds, let us further reflect, what is the meaning of death for us personally.

Strange as it is, we seem as if we expected to die somehow in the person of another, so little do we enter into what we say, so feebly, so remotely do

we apply it to ourselves. Remember, then, for once, that when we say we are to die, it is our own self, that very frame we now animate, that is to verify the words. It is those very limbs we have about us, those same arms we now move so freely and make so promptly subservient to our wants, that, unnerved by the touch of death, will then lie weak and powerless by our side. Apply your hand, and feel how warm and vigorous the pulse of life plays within its secret chamber; that same breast will then be forsaken by its essential heat, and vibrate no more with vital motion. It is that same tongue, now so much at our command, which answers so promptly all our thoughts and desires, that will then be parched up with mortal thirst, and cleave to the palate inarticulate and motionless. Those very eyes which now view those about us will then swim in the mist of death, and stand fixed and paralyzed in their sockets. It is the same ear with which you now hear these words, that are then to relax their fibres, and echo no more with the sounds of this world. Review the rest of your frame, and you will find that you have actually about you the instruments of your own fate: it is in one or the other of these organs that you are to receive the stroke of death. They all stand open and vulnerable, waiting only the commission from above. This, at least, is certain, that whoever you may be, or whatever your progress in life, death already has its eye upon you, and has ever fixed its unerring aim; and that your vital frame is now not more certainly in the possession of life, health and vigor, than it will be, and

that soon, lifeless, disolved, and confounded absolutely with the vulgar mould on which you now stand.

Considering then, these points: the uncertainty of the time of death, the certainty of its occurrence, and that we, personally are its prey—what is the plain inference that we must draw?—Evidently this, that it is the great business of our life to prepare for death. Let the thought of death determine us in all our actions and have a part in all our calculations. It will oppose its salutary influence to the allurements of passion and the seductions of temptation. Such has been the practice of the wisest and best of men; it made their lives holy and their deaths happy, and is a sure means of procuring for us the same blessing.

PRAYER.

O merciful Jesus, Who neither in life nor in death forsakest those who put their trust in Thee: grant that I may live in Thy grace and die in Thy favor. May Thy sacred name be the last accent of my tongue, the last aspiration of my heart, the last thought of my soul, that whenever I depart this life, I may, through Thy merits, be admitted to the mansions of eternal bliss. Amen.

Points of Meditation for next morning.

XII.

Eternity.

"Man shall go into the house of his eternity."—Eccl. XII. 15.

1. *After death, follows eternity.* — My eternity depends on my life. There is nothing surer. "According to the works of his hands it shall be repaid him." (Job XII. 14.) "For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap." (Gal. VI. 8.) Our good and wicked works are so many seeds for eternity. Because I am the author of my works, I am also the author of my eternity. Hence, when I recollect my frailties, and the carelessness of which I have been guilty, I have reason to fear; but I have also reason to hope, for, after all it depends on me whether or not I ensure heaven for myself.

2. *My eternity depends on my short life.* — What is time, compared with eternity? A term hastening towards its end; a dream that vanishes; a nothing — when compared with eternity. — How do the blessed in heaven, how do the reprobate in hell now regard time and eternity?

3. *My eternity depends, perhaps, on one moment of my life.* — Grace has its moments. God is the Lord of His gifts; therefore He can grant them according to His will. To what degree of sanctity and happiness can one moment of grace lead me if I make good use of it! However, in the same manner one such moment may be the occasion of my eternal ruin, if I do not accept and co-operate with the grace offered me in it. The neglect of one single inspiration of grace may be the cause of my eternal damnation, just as one co-operation with a divine inspiration may be the beginning, for me, of an eternity of bliss.

Third Day.

Meditation during the Forenoon.

XIII.

Venial Sin.

"He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little."—
Eccl. XIX. 1.

After mortal sin, venial sin is the greatest of all possible evils. "He is truly wise," says St. Bernard, "who esteems things as they are." St. Thomas says, "By venial sin the soul is disordered in adhering to some worldly good, but not so far as to turn from the last end." Thus the vital principle of grace remains. We may say the soul becomes infirm, but does not die. An illustration will throw light on the subject. It often happens that some indisposition overtakes a man, such that persons skilled in medicine, when asked if it is dangerous, answer, "Not at present, but it may turn out very serious. There is nothing much amiss yet; at the same time, if it be not checked, and much more, if it be neglected, it will be serious."

It is true, venial sin does not contemn God as mortal sin does; but it is also true that it does not hold Him in that just estimation which He deserves. It opposes itself to the divine will, but in a certain manner; as St. Thomas says, it acts beside the law rather than against it. It offends God by not observing the divine precept perfectly. If so, how can it be called trivial? To St. Bonaventure this saying appeared to be a blasphemy. In venial sin we have to consider not so much the slight trans-

gression of the divine commandments, as the infinite Majesty of God, whose command is not executed with sufficient exactness.

If a man do not execute the divine will in a small thing, he commits a fault which has no excuse, since he could easily avoid the transgression. If to avoid it, he had to labor much, or to overcome a great repugnance, he might be pitied if he failed. But what strength is requisite to overcome in a slight thing? For this reason the fault is inexcusable.

Two things of great importance are to be considered in venial sin: 1) The person who is offended, namely God, our King, Redeemer, Father; 2) The person who offends, that is, a just soul, who, by sanctifying grace is the adopted child and spouse of God.

When there is question of a great personage, the least want of respect is a considerable slight. Shall venial sin, which offends the Majesty of God, be considered slight? "It is not so," exclaims St. Bernard; "it is never trivial to contemn the Deity, even in the smallest degree." The law of Almighty God should be kept as the apple of the eye, to which even a little straw causes pain and trouble. "Keep my commandments, and thou shalt live; and my law as the apple of thy eye." (Prov. VII. 2.)

If we consider in God the title of Father, what a disloyal and ungrateful son would he be who should thus express himself, "I will not take away the life of my father, nor even wound him mortally. But I will displease him from morning until night, I will never do anything to please him; on the con-

trary, I will always prick and wound him slightly." What an unworthy son would this be! — I am precisely that most ungrateful child to a God Who is to me so loving and beneficent a Father. I think nothing of continually displeasing Him; He might justly reprehend me, "If I be a Father, where is your love towards me?" I have become like to those Jews who did not crucify Jesus, but ridiculed, beat and scourged Him. Should such impiety appear to me as nothing?

If the person who commits venial sin be considered, how much the crime increases! It is committed by a just soul, who by sanctifying grace is the friend of God, His spouse and adopted child. Who is not aware that the slightest displeasure from a friend, and much more from a spouse or a child is always more keenly felt than even grievous offences from a stranger or an enemy? Our Divine Redeemer, at the treason of Judas, appeared more displeased with the ingratitude of the traitor, than with the treason itself. By the mouth of His prophet He made this complaint, "If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it. And if he that hated me, had spoken great things against me: I would perhaps have hid myself from him. But thou, a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar." (Ps. LIV. 13.—14.) Reflect here, how God has loved us, and how many benefits you received from Him: and we are so ungrateful as to displease Him frequently, when He has thus overwhelmed us with proofs of His love!

Notwithstanding all these considerations some will say that venial sin is certainly not a grievous

fault. True, when we compare it to mortal sin. Nevertheless, a person who deliberately and frequently commits venial sins, may be led on to the commission of mortal sins — not because of the number and frequency of his venial faults, but of the laxity from which they proceed, the scandal and danger which they may occasion. Because of the laxity from which they proceed: St. Anselm says, "Every soul grows lukewarm by degrees, by passing slightly over and despising small faults." — Because of the scandal which they may occasion: Others easily do what they see you do. Hence the saying of St. Bernard, "Frivolous jokes are jokes in the mouths of seculars, but in the mouths of religious they are blasphemies." Because of the danger which may arise from them: St. Thomas teaches, "Venial sin, of itself, predisposes to mortal sin." For, as St. Gregory says, "Never will a soul remain in the place where it falls, because he who falls once of his own accord, is driven lower by the sheer weight of his own iniquity; so that falling once into the depths, he will constantly sink lower."

If, then, venial sin be light as a crime, who will say that it is light as an evil? And even should we suppose, what in reality is not the case, that venial sin is a slight thing in its criminal malice, we should reflect on the multitude of these faults committed from morning till night. St. Augustine says, "If you fear not the weight, tremble at least for the number." If mortal sin is a thunderbolt which kills, so many venial sins are hailstones which ruin the vineyard of the soul. Mortal sin

is a tempestuous sea which causes shipwreck, venial sins are like drops uniting together, and also causing shipwreck. The effect is the same at last, however different the cause. Whether this happens by a great sea which envelopes, or by many drops enclosed in the keel of the vessel, is of little matter when the ship sinks. Many venial sins dispose to mortal sin, and make the soul fall into it.

The evils which venial sin brings to the soul are all great, and worthy of consideration.

Consider, first, the stain it brings to the soul. If a stain of ink fall on a rich dress its value is so much lessened. A soul enriched with virtuous habits and supernatural gifts, with sanctifying grace, to be stained with a venial fault—is not this a serious evil?

Consider, secondly, although venial sin does not dispossess the soul of sanctifying grace, yet it prevents actual graces which Our Lord would bestow were the soul faultless. Actual graces are certain illuminations to know what is good, certain efficacious inspirations to embrace it; compunction, spiritual sweetness in prayer, alacrity to overcome reluctance in performing good works, great courage in resisting temptations.

A father displeased with his son for frequently disobeying him, does not show him the same marks of affection as if he had been obedient: so God, indignant for the ungrateful meanness of a man who merely contents himself with not offending Him mortally, and nothing more, deprives him, in punishment of his unworthiness, of his most special

graces. Many lament and express surprise at not finding relish in prayer. They pray continually to God and to the saints, and are not heard. Why do they find themselves so weak and fragile at every temptation? Because they are continually displeasing God. How can they ever expect extraordinary graces, or that their petitions to heaven should be easily heard? — How is it possible for them to stand firm at the assaults of temptation, when they are abandoned by heavenly assistance on account of their venial sins? — They live in the grace of God; but they lead a life similar to consumptive persons, who are pale, languid and emaciated, in whom but little life remains.

The greatest damage venial sin brings to the soul is, that it disposes to mortal sin. According to St. Thomas, this occurs in two ways: First, indirectly; for God withdrawing the more powerful assistance of His grace, the soul remains weak, and easily falls into mortal sin. Secondly, directly: from the habit of committing slight faults, the soul is drawn by degrees into a great fault. And St. Thomas attests that venial sin differs from mortal sin as an imperfect thing in its kind differs from what is perfect — as a boy differs from a man.

No one would have near him long a young lion, lest the growth of his teeth and nails might endanger life. So every one should remove far from him venial sin, lest, resembling a young wild beast, it might afterwards become great and dangerous. The curiosity of Eve degenerated into great disobedience; too much affection for money led Judas to the betrayal of his divine Master; human respect caused Peter to deny Him.

St. Augustine observes, that sinners multiplying venial sins dispose themselves to mortal sin, which draws them to perdition. A similitude is taken from ropes. A few threads twisted together form cords ; these little cords twisted together form those cables which turn windlasses and move ships. The process is from the less to the greater, from disease to death. Venial sin is a disease in which the intellect is obscured, the reason clouded, the will weakened, and the whole man inclined to laxity, remissness and sensuality. The passions acquire new strength by every fresh concession, while a general torpor and insensibility to all that is good binds down the whole man. Thus helpless, thus diseased, the hour of temptation comes upon him when, without a struggle, and without a shock, he falls into the death of mortal sin, from which there is every reason to fear he will never revive. Such is the fatal consequence of indulging in the habit of venial sin — a mortal fall, followed by final impenitence here and by hell hereafter.

Punishment is like a shadow which follows the fault. From the size of the shadow we measure the body ; so from the grievousness of the chastisements with which God punishes venial sin we may clearly conjecture what its malice is. God being infinitely just, He justly proportions His punishments ; being infinitely wise, He well knows what that proportion is ; being incapable of human weakness, He cannot punish more than He ought, through passion, or false apprehension, or from ill regulated motives, as sometimes occurs among men.

Venial sins, for which just souls did not penance

in this life, are atoned for by the most severe pains of purgatory. If any one, while living, for a lie was to be thrown into a fiery furnace, what terror would it occasion? Yet he would feel but for a few moments the pain of fire, as he must soon die. What torment, then, for a soul in purgatory to be obliged to live for a long time in that fire, and in so active a fire, that in Scripture it is called spiritual and the quintessence of fire. (Isai. IV. 4.) St. Augustine calls it "a fire so tormenting, that it is the same as the fire of hell;" with the difference, that the fire for the damned is eternal, for the souls in purgatory it is not. It is immensely prolonged by the desire and hope of seeing God; and receives additional intensity because a soul suffering there has no earthly objects to divert its attention. It is entirely turned to God, and has no desire but to enjoy Him. This desire ungratified, it lives in a most tormenting martyrdom. God would wish to have the soul with Him in heaven, but He is obliged to cleanse it by fire. For what?—For venial sins! Yet blind man dares call venial sins light and of little moment. O folly! The saints, enlightened by God, did not so esteem them.

If there is question of any bodily ailment, however small, it is held in great account, as if it were a great evil. On the contrary, if mention is made of the evil of the soul, it is held for nothing. If a man have symptons of the slightest illness, physicians are immediately called in, medicines are taken, a rigorous diet is observed. Should any one say, There is no danger, why then use so many remedies? the answer is, The evil is small, but it may become

dangerous if not speedily cured. — So much is said and done for the small evils of the body; and what is said and done for the slight faults of the soul? "It is not a mortal sin. For this we are not condemned to hell. It is a matter of little consequence." — O deplorable blindness!

Add to these considerations the reflection that to us the way to heaven is not broader or more commodious than it was to those who have already arrived at that happy abode. By them venial sin was never deemed a slight evil. By them no care was thought superfluous for avoiding it, no austerity, no rigor too great for its punishment. And shall we say their notions were erroneous, the views which they took of their duty incorrect? — If they so studiously avoided venial sin, it was because they well knew that a slight ailment is often the cause of a mortal disease, and that the consumption which slowly and imperceptibly wastes the frame is in the end more inevitably fatal than the fever that seems to threaten it with immediate dissolution. Follow their truly wise example. Think nothing little which is an offence against God, nothing to be despised that may conduct to perdition. Remember that every action of your life, every word which you utter, and every thought which you conceive is instantly registered in the book of judgment; that the day is not far distant when it will be again reproduced, either for the increase of your reward, or for the augmentation of your eternal misery; and that it is only by fidelity to your minor duties that you can hope to hear on that day the cheering sentence of approbation, "Well done, good and

faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things, enter then into the joy of thy Lord." (Matth. XXV. 23.)

PRAYER.

My Lord and Saviour! How have I been deceived and blinded, to esteem as nothing what was so grievous! I have despised the great evil of venial sin solely because it was not the greatest evil, such as mortal sin. But now, humble and contrite, I wish to weep for these sins most bitterly, and with tearful eyes I beg pardon for them. Lord, be merciful to me a sinner! Enlighten me to know the evil I have done, and render me fervent, that I may displease Thee no longer. "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation: and strengthen me with a perfect spirit." (Ps. L. 14.) Amen.

Spiritual Reading.

XIV.

Purity of Intention.

> "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God." — I. Cor. X. 31.

Practical sanctity consists in doing well and with a good intention what we have to do. Our daily duties form the works by which we are one day to be judged. As a fact, we are always doing something or other. The hours of the day pass by, and each hour has its occupation. Even if it has been spent in idleness or in sin, it has had its run

and its result. Something is done, and a great deal is done, perhaps, in the course of the day: but how, or for whom? — If all has been offered to God, as the Apostle directs, then a double result has followed: we have fulfilled the duties of our state, and have spent a day which will be rewarded hereafter.

The habit of purity of intention will secure for us this double result. To practise it, we ought to ask ourselves regarding each day's work: First, Is there any act which God would *not* have me do? Secondly, Do I omit any act which God *would* have me do? Thirdly, Do I perform each act *in the manner* as God would have me do it? — Examine these questions one by one, and see, how you can, without adding to your day's work, derive a rich result from your labors.

First, *Is there any act which God would not have me do?*— If there is, such an act is out of the influence of a pious intention, inasmuch as what is forbidden by God cannot be offered to Him.

Secondly, *Do I omit any act which God would have me to do?* — We have each day certain positive duties, duties corresponding to our state of life, which must be complied with, or else we are guilty of a sin of omission.

Thirdly, *Do I perform each act in the manner God would have me do it?* — Here is the real question of intention. The act is supposed to be performed; the question is, *how* and in *what spirit* is it done? This at once brings us to a principle which is enforced in those treatises of Moral Theology which treat of human actions; namely, that there is no

action which is really indifferent to him who performs it. What is meant by an indifferent action is one which in itself is not considered as either good or bad. *In itself;* because when in addition to the act we consider the person who performs it, and the end that prompts it, an element is introduced which must not be overlooked. For example: If we, in our meals, indulge in sensuality, that which in itself was innocent, may bring injury to the soul. When the Psalmist prayed, "May the Lord keep thy coming in and thy going out" (Ps. CXX. 8.), he showed how such simple acts need the blessing of God. And when St. Paul bade us, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God (I. Cor. X. 31.), he affirms precisely the same.

In every deliberate action which we perform, is present what may be called its body and its soul. The body, or outward part, is the act itself; the soul, or inward part, is the deliberate end or intention for which it is done. If an act is not wrong in itself, but is indifferent, if it be offered to God, and be done in order to please Him, this soul and inward reality gives life and value to it. If, on the other hand, it be done through a wrong motive, God condemns it, and it will be imputed to us as sinful in a greater or less degree. Thus Our Lord condemned the prayers and alms-deeds of the pharisees, because their motive was vanity.

In order to help us to practise purity of intention, and to secure to all our actions the value which by this means may be attached to them, we should attend to this duty especially on two occasions.

The first occasion is in the morning, declaring that we propose to do everything in accordance with God's will, to promote His honor and glory, and beg Him to keep us from all sin. The other occasion is at the beginning of every action of importance, or when about to do something of more than ordinary responsibility. The *virtual* intention, as it is called when we do all our actions by virtue of the morning's offering, is good; an *actual* intention, attached to each single action, is better. The frequent repetition of this actual intention will assist us towards that habitual good spirit, which animates the saints, who see God in every act, and make each single one have the nature and value of prayer. The care to have in all things a pure intention, certainly would advance us rapidly in the way of perfection. And yet this salutary practice is very much neglected. The reason is, because these obstacles stand in the way, namely, indolence, human respect and self-love.

The first enemy is indolence. There is such an habitual carelessness and thoughtlessness on the part of many, that the idea of the "one thing necessary" is by no means kept prominently in their minds; and therefore it does not occur to them to direct every action towards the end for which God has made them, and for which they ought to be exerting themselves. Whatever implies an effort they avoid, and because the directing of each act towards God either by a general and virtual offering in the morning, or by occasional offerings during the day, seems to require exertion, it is omitted as a work of supererogation beyond what they care to attempt.

The second obstacle is human respect. This is a motive which substitutes the approval or the fear of man in place of the will and command of God. It is the fertile source of many positive sins; it is also the cause why many actions, which might be sanctified if done for God and offered to Him, are deprived of all merit and reward. Our own experience tells us of its influence, and it needs but to be mentioned to be reconized as an enemy to the purity of intention. Purity of intention and human respect are irreconcilable.

The third obstacle, self-love, puts self in the place of God. It is well known to every observer of human nature, that some people know how to push self into everything, even the most holy, as well as the most abject. The pharisees are examples in Judaism, the cynics examples in philosophy. They spoiled everything by their self-seeking.

It is the saying of a wise heathen, "He is to be called evil, who is good only for His own sake." And a man, who does evil that good may come of it, or good to an evil purpose, that man acts like him who rolls in thorns that he may sleep easily; he roasts himself in the fire that he may quench his thirst with his own perspiration; he turns his face to the east that he may go to bed with the sun. No intention can sanctify an unholy or unlawful action. Saul, the king, disobeyed God's commandment and spared the cattle of Amalech to reserve the best for sacrifice; and Saul, the pharisee, persecuted the Church of God with a design to do God a service; and they that killed the apostles had

also good purposes, as they viewed it, but their actions were unlawful. When there is both goodness in action and purity in intention; when we go to God in ways of His own choosing or approving, then our eye is single, our hands are clean and our hearts are pure.

To reduce these considerations to practice:

1) In all our actions, let us seek the glory of God. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God." (I. Cor. X. 31.) Practical sanctity consists in doing well and with a pure intention whatsoever we do.

2) Let us be careful that we do not perform the action without the permission or warrant of God; secondly, that we design it to the glory of God, if not in the direct action, at least in its consequence; if not in particular, at least in the whole order of things and accidents; thirdly, that it may be so blessed, that what we intend for innocent and holy purposes, may not, by any chance, or abuse, or misunderstanding of men, be turned into evil, or made the occasion of sin.

3) In prosecution of the action, renew and re-enkindle your purpose by short ejaculations: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name let all glory be given!" And consider: Now I am doing the work of God; I am His servant; I am in a happy employment; I am doing my Master's business; I am not at my own disposal; I am using His talents, and all the gain must be His."

4) Let not that which began well, and was intended for God's glory, decline and end in your own praise, or temporal satisfaction, or sin.

5) If any temptation to spoil your purpose happens in a religious duty, do not omit the action, but rather strive to rectify your intention. St. Bernard taught us this rule. For when the devil, observing him to preach excellently, and to do much benefit to his hearers, tempted him to vain glory, hoping that the saint, to avoid that, would cease preaching, he simply answered, "I neither began for thee, neither for thee will I make an end."

6) In all actions which are of long continuance, let your holy and pious intention be actual, that is, let it, by a special prayer or action, by a peculiar act of resignation or oblation, be given to God. In smaller actions, in things little or indifferent, fail not to have a pious habitual intention, that is, let it be included within your desire to do all for God's glory.

But because cases may happen in which a man's heart may deceive him, and he may not well know his own spirit, consider, in conclusion, a few of the signs of purity of intention.

1) It is likely our hearts are pure, and our intentions spotless, when we are not solicitous of the opinions and censures of men, but only that we do what we know to be our duty, and that it be acceptable to God. If we desire that God should approve of us it is a sign that we do His work, and expect from Him our reward.

2) He that does well in private, between God and his own soul, has given himself a good testimony that his purposes are full of honesty, nobleness and integrity.

3) It is well, also, when we are not solicitous or troubled concerning the results of our actions. After having offered them to God by prayer, let Him dispose of them.

4) He loves virtue for God's sake and its own, who loves and honors it wherever it is to be seen; but he that is envious or angry at virtue that is not his own, at the perfection or excellence of his neighbor, is not covetous of virtue, but of its reward and reputation, and his intention is polluted. He that desires only that the work of God and religion go on, is pleased with it, whosoever be the instrument.

5) When we are not solicitous concerning the instruments and means of our actions, but use those means which God has laid before us with resignation, indifference and thankfulness, it is a good sign that we are rather intent upon God's glory than our own convenience and satisfaction.

In a word, we have a pure intention, if we can truly say from our heart, "All for the greater glory of God!"

Implore Him, that no pride or self-seeking, no impure motives pollute your spirit and defile your words and actions; but that he make your body and spirit His servants, that doing all things for His glory here, you may be made its partaker hereafter.

Afternoon Conference.

XV.

On Temptations.

It will be well for us to understand something regarding the nature of temptation, in order that

we be the better on our guard against these incentives to evil, which have proved so fatal to the virtue of many, and, perhaps often to our own.

Temptation, in the sense in which we will consider it, means an allurement to sin; it is a suggestion of what is evil, and a drawing of the will, or an attempt to draw the will to consent to that evil.

There are three stages in temptation: First, the suggestion of the evil; secondly, delight in the object suggested, and thirdly, consent.

The first stage of temptation is *suggestion.* It is the act in which something forbidden is placed before us. This does not necessarily imply anything sinful on our part, as it may be without any wish of ours that some tempting power thus tries to allure us away from our duty. Suggestions to evil are frequent enough in our course through life. They may have their source outwardly in the words, the vain objects, the sinful persons, the scandalous example which may present themselves before us any moment. Or they may have their source from within, in some of those imaginations, thoughts, disorderly affections which, however unwilling we are to give them encouragement, may arise and strive to create pleasure and gain consent.

The second stage in temptation is *pleasure* and delight in the object presented. We are so weak by nature and so prone to evil, that we are easily affected by a sinful object when it is presented before us. Hence the necessity of resisting at once when the suggestion is made, lest we be influenced

by it. It is at this stage of temptation that vigor, promptitude and an unhesitating turning away of the soul from the sinful or dangerous object are demanded. The pleasure and delight may be either material or formal. It is material, when it affects us externally, tells upon our senses or imagination almost in spite of ourselves, but yet has not begun to gain the assent of our mind. But when the mind deliberately takes pleasure and knowingly follows in a forbidden direction, there is formal delight, the commencement of sin, and a greatness of sin in proportion to the deliberateness.

The last stage of temptation is *consent*. This implies the exercise of our will, by which, when we know that an act is sinful, we do the act either in reality or desire. We give ourselves up to the power which is alluring us, and knowingly yield to its influence. The heart is the seat of the will, and the fact of giving free and willing consent to an object which is opposed to God is giving our will to sin.

One very important and essential duty with regard to temptation is *avoiding the occasion of sin*. By an occasion of sin is meant some external circumstance in which an allurement to sin is likely to arise. Evil company, for instance, is an occasion of sin, for it is proverbial how much we are likely to be influenced in our character and conduct by those with whom we associate. Places, in which we have reason to believe that danger may arise to our virtue, are occasions. Reading of an immoral or infidel tendency is an occasion, and one with regard to which in these days of facility and en-

couragement for reading, we must be specially cautious. For in all these there is found an allurement to sin. Evil is suggested: the suggestion may be entertained and delighted in; consent may follow, and thus occasions of sin may lead to the completion of the three stages of temptation and to deliberate sin. Hence arises the necessity of avoiding the occasions of sin.

As an occasion implies some external circumstance which may lead to the commission of sin, it follows that those occasions are most to be avoided, in which sin is most likely to be committed. Some occasions are immediately connected with sin, others more remotely. The former, which are called proximate occasions, are those circumstances in which there is every likelihood that sin will follow; the latter, which are called remote occasions, are those in which sin more probably may not be committed. Going into bad company, in which sin again and again has been committed by any person, is to such a person an immediate and proximate occasion. The sin is sure to be suggested; the company itself is a suggestion. Most probably pleasure and delectation will ensue, and with equal probability consent will be the consequence. As the occasion, therefore, leads to sin, it must be avoided; and it is in itself sinful to expose oneself willingly to such a danger.

It is quite intelligible that what is a proximate occasion to one person, may be a very remote occasion, or no occasion whatever, to another. Each one's experience and conscience will easily and instinctively tell him what is to him an

occasion of sin ; and as natural instinct will caution us against touching fire because it will burn us, so hatred and fear of sin will caution us against every circumstance which will spiritually injure us or lead us into danger.

Our own weakness, and the power and persistency of our three spiritual enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh, combine in dictating that prudent avoidance of occasions of sin which is certainly the best evidence of Christian valor. To expose ourselves unnecessarily to danger is never a sign of courage, but is a proof of rashness and folly. Would you drink poison, being willing to run the risk of escaping without harm ? Or would you take up your abode in a plague-stricken city, in which hundreds are dying every day, if stern necessity or duty did not compel you, and think that you could keep well and happy in the midst of the desolation around you ? Whoever would do such things as these might be notable for other qualities, but discretion would not be a feature in his character. It is true that the grace of God is powerful enough to enable us to conquer any temptation, but it does not attend upon those who expose themselves heedlessly to danger. The occasion leads to suggestion, the suggestion to delectation, delectation to consent, consent to actual commission. Acts lead to habit, habit to obstinacy, obstinacy produces a kind of feeling of necessity of sinning and impossibility of helping it ; then comes final impenitence, despair, death in a state of mortal sin, and the eternal perdition of the soul. All this, because occasions are not avoided.

What, then, is our duty with regard to temptation? We must be on our guard; we must fly from an occasion, which, though not sought, may happen to arise. We must pray, and thus bring God to our help, and His holy angels to shield us. We must frequent the sacraments; for these are channels of grace, they diminish the force of concupiscence, increase our union with God and therefore our separation from sin. The practice of acts of self-denial is a great help towards conquering in the time of temptation; for such acts prove that we are in earnest: they enable us to subjugate nature, and thus weaken one fertile source of temptation. And one most important matter to attend to is *prompt resistance at the beginning.* The moment any suggestion of evil arises it ought to be at once crushed: there should be no dallying with what we ought to fear and hate.

The recollection of the presence of God, of the great truths of salvation, of the horrible deformity of sin, will always serve as a secure defence. Such thoughts will enable us to live in a closer union with God, and in the time of trial we shall be less likely to be affected by the low and unworthy feelings of corrupt nature.

We are not alone in the struggle, God and His angels are standing by and on our side. Remember, therefore, the words of Holy Scripture, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him." (James, I. 12.)

Evening Meditation.

XVI.

On Judgment.

"The searcher of hearts and reins is God." — Ps. VII. 10.

The Apostle reminds us, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment." (Hebr. IX. 27.) Death, then, is immediately followed by the judgment of God; that is, in the same moment when our soul shall leave our body, it will appear before Him to be judged. It is true, there will be a general judgment at the end of this world, at which we all must appear to receive our final sentence; but before this day arrives at the consummation of time, there is, according to Scripture, a special judgment at which all men must appear, and which takes place secretly between God and the soul.

It is not necessary for the soul to undertake a long journey to appear before God. Wherever a person may die, God will be present to execute supreme justice, for He is everywhere, and manifests His power and might in all places. Wherever we may be, as soon as we yielded our spirit and ceased to live, we shall be surrounded, so to speak, by the majesty of God. We shall perceive His presence and experience the truth of the words, "I have feared God as waves swelling over me, and His weight I was not able to bear." (Job XXXI. 23.) Thus God will, in a manner, penetrate us and surround us, without being in need of any one to hold us captive.

What shall we do? How shall we endeavor to help ourselves? In vain shall we try to escape the Lord. He will hold us in His hands, and whosoever falls into the hands of the living God cannot escape. In vain shall we call on the assistance of our fellow men: there will be no one to whom we could have recourse, because we shall be alone with God. And even if it were possible for us to call every creature to our assistance: what could they prevail against their Creator and ours? Our friends, and charitably disposed persons, will perhaps assist us with their prayers; but will these prayers save our souls if God does not hear them? And will He hear them if they are not assisted by our own merits, by the holiness of our lives?

We are, then, at that awful moment, alone with God; with God, on Whom depends our fate for all eternity, and Who is about to decree it; alone with God, with nothing and nobody to assist us but our good works. And if these be wanting — how shall we fare? — Oh, how we shall then learn to esteem a pious and holy life! How shall we then learn to appreciate our vocation, if we have cherished it and fulfilled its duties! With what confidence shall we be inspired if we have strictly observed mortification of the senses, detachment from the world, constancy in prayer, fidelity in small things, in the fulfillment of all our duties! How grateful shall we be that we did ourselves violence in order to overcome the natural inclinations; that we neither followed certain examples, nor took heed of certain regards which might have caused us to become negligent in the performance of our duties. This

consideration, and the recollection of the past, will compose our whole strength, and prevent us from fearing a judgment where we are alone to defend ourselves.

But on the contrary, if there is nothing in our lives on which to rely; if we see ourselves in the power of a God Who is about to judge us according to the manner in which we have spent our years, which show nothing but tepidity, negligence, transgressions of the law, an awful emptiness, and a fruitless, if not a culpable, uselessness: how disconsolate, how full of anguish shall we then be! "They shall come with fear at the thought of their sins, and their iniquities shall stand against them to convict them." (Wisd. IV. 20.) We shall not be permitted to return to life to make a better use of it: must we, then, not tremble and fear to appear before God and His judgment in order to render an account of our sadly misspent life? — Why did we not make a better use of our time and opportunities?

Now we have still the time and means; perhaps in a short time we shall have both no longer. Let us, then, profit by them, and avoid an impending danger sufficiently great to warrant every possible vigilance and foresight to ward it off.

In human tribunals the trial must be regularly instituted, and the judge issues his decree only after having examined and well weighed in his mind all the facts, so that he may not be misled. The defendant is questioned, confronted with the witnesses, and sentenced only after the evidence has been established beyond doubt.

God will proceed in the same manner with us.

We shall be subjected to a most minute and comprehensive, but withal to a most expeditious and convicting examination. From the dawn of reason to the close of a life no matter how long, there will be no thought, no desire, no word, no action, no omission of duty, which will not be included in the examination. And as circumstances usually either increase or diminish the sinfulness of an act, therefore neither a thought, nor an intention, nor a disposition, in a word nothing, will be too trifling to escape scrutiny. The eye of God will detect the least flaw; and, as He does not detract anything from the merits of our works, thus He will also take notice of everything that depreciates their value, or mars their sanctity.

Our examination will be instantaneous. At present an examination of ourselves causes us infinite trouble, and is, nevertheless, insufficient, because we are unable to remember our whole life. It is impossible for us to remember what we did, spoke and thought during a single day, because there are so many things to which we do not pay attention, and which we forget. But between God and the soul it will not be thus. After departing from the body, the soul will be enabled to comprehend in a glance its whole life, and God, Who from the first moment of our being never lost sight of us, and is not subject to forgetfulness, needs neither time nor space to recall our whole deportment and to place it vividly before us. With a single ray of His supernatural light He will illuminate the most hidden things, and uniting them as in a focus, He will so distinctly place every single one of them

before our eyes, as if it were the only one we were to contemplate. Therefore we will see them all at once and at the same time, and our souls will view them despite of their multiplicity at one glance, because we are no longer impeded by material things, and are able to act with undivided force.

Hence, also, the examination will be decisive and convicting. It will not be founded on deduction and inference, but will consist of the simple statement of facts. Thus there will be no possibility of a dispute with God, or of concealing anything from Him. How many things we no longer remember will then stand vividly before our eyes? How many sins to which we paid no attention, thinking them trifling, shall we then find! How many delusions, excuses and pretended justifications shall we then acknowledge to have been fraudulent! How many difficulties and questions which we have solved to our own advantage will then cause our reprobation! How many virtues which we paraded before our fellow beings will then lose their lustre, and appear as self-love, vanity, custom, sensual affection, politeness, and perhaps even hypocrisy and dissimulation!

What excuse shall we then advance? Our conscience will denounce every attempt thereat; it will take God's part against us, and compel us to make the short but terrible confession, "I have sinned!" Why not admit it now and at once? Why not confess it sorrowfully before God now, when it is still to our advantage, so that we be not compelled to do so despairingly before His tribunal? Why do we not listen to the reproaches of our own consci-

ence, and try to quiet it, admonished as we are by Jesus Christ to be at agreement with our adversary whilst we are on the way with him, lest, perhaps, the adversary deliver us to the judge? (Matth. V. 25.) If we respond to the promptings of conscience it will be our advocate before God. It will present to Him our sincere conversion, our penance, our good resolutions and their happy results. It will efface everything damaging to us from the pages of the Book of Divine Justice, and obtain full pardon for us.

The judgment will be severe in proportion to the graces received. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required," says Our Lord Himself. (Luke XII. 48.) These truths caused even St. Jerome to tremble with fear. And many of the holy penitents trembled at the thought of judgment:

"How shall I that day endure?
What kind patron's voice secure,
When the righteous scarce are sure?"

After the scrutiny of all our deeds shall have been finished, the Supreme Judge will pass sentence. It is a sentence of extreme happiness or extreme torment; there is no medium. Human tribunals frequently award sentences without entirely deciding in favor of one party to the total ruin of the other; and by half measures succeed in partially pleasing both parties. In the judgment of God the decree is to be passed either for heaven or hell, without alternative. How terrible!

Although this will not be a public sentence like the one at the general judgment, it will nevertheless, be irrevocable. For God will never alter what He

decreed for our perpetual unhappiness or for our eternal bliss. From thenceforward we shall no longer be either in a way to lose or to regain His grace: we have arrived at the limit of sin and merit. How important, then, that the sentence be favorable! — Awful thought! How could we so often forget it? To increase its effect we need but imagine ourselves standing before the tribunal of divine Justice, and hear in the spirit the terrible words pronounced against us, "Depart, ye cursed!" (Matth. XXV. 41.) What a thunderbolt! We must depart from God; we are to be excluded from His presence for all eternity! God has cursed us, and we are not able to induce Him to recall His curse, and have not the least hope to regain His favor! Has he for this purpose given us so many graces, so many means of sanctification? — And now He withdraws all the graces which He so abundantly offered, and places us among the damned! He intended to raise us to the highest places of His kingdom, and now He thrusts us into the deepest abyss!

Let this consideration influence our lives, and thus prevent its occurrence, by following the wholesome inspirations which it causes, and happy shall we be if we begin a new life, and prevent this possibility from becoming a reality. By the renewal and change of our life we may obtain the sentence of bliss and salvation reserved for pious souls. How happy shall we be to hear from the lips of our Supreme Judge the consoling invitation: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over few things, I will place thee over

many: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matth. XXV. 21.)

Once in possession of this pure and heavenly joy, we shall understand how little God asked of us in this world, and that everything we did or suffered for His sake is nothing in comparison to the glory for which He destines us. Could we then be sorry for anything, it would be that we were so remiss in our fervor, and did not exert ourselves to a greater degree. Can we, in reality, do too much for a God, Who in His judgment is just as liberal and noble in the reward of fidelity, as He is strict and inexorable in the punishment of negligence and sloth?

If, therefore, upon a review of our lives, we find reason to tremble for the result of a trial so severe, let us weigh and examine our actions now by its decisions: if we fear judgment, let us fear that by which it is terrible. Thus we shall learn duly to appreciate in time that which alone can render us happy in eternity.

PRAYER.

Great God! At Whose glance heaven and earth tremble: how shall we appear in Thy presence after having so frequently offended Thee? When we reflect on the years of our past life, we find nothing but ingratitude and innumerable vices. How, then, shall we render an account of ourselves? Humble and contrite, we cast ourselves at Thy feet. Efface, we beseech Thee, through Thy Most Precious Blood, the stains of our sins. Judge us now, and absolve us, so that weighed by the standard of Thy cross, we need not fear for our failings before Thy terrible tribunal after death. Amen.

Points of Meditation for next Morning.

XVII.

Recapitulation.

"Evil men think not on judgment."
— Prov. XXI. 5.

1. *After death, judgment.* — The justice of God demands that there be a judgment, when He "will render to every man, according to his works." (Ps. LXI. 13.) As soon as the sentence shall have been passed, the just will receive eternal reward, and the reprobate eternal punishment. — "O Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner!" — "Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear, for I am afraid of Thy judgments." (Ps. CXVIII. 120.)

2. *What will my sentence be?* — In any case, one for eternity. — What is eternity? — As far as it concerns me, an endless term, which cannot be measured by human standard; an immutable existence, which can be changed by nothing. *An endless term!* Add to it whatever you can imagine, you will thereby not augment its duration; subtract from it whatever periods of time you can conceive, you will thereby not abbreviate it. — *Ever! Never!* These two words best describe eternity, *and they will be my sentence.*

3. *Ever! — Never! — Where?* — At judgment this question is irrevocably answered. Ever — never — in heaven, or ever — never — in hell! — Ever in torment! Never more in probation, danger, trial and suffering; — never in the beatific presence of God! — Which will be my sentence? — I do not know! But this I know, that it needs only a sudden cessation of the vital functions of my body, and I shall stand before my Judge. — "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy!" (Ps. L. 3.)

Fourth Day.

Meditation during the Forenoon.

XVIII.

On Confession.

"He that hideth his sins shall not prosper; but he that shall confess, and forsake them, shall obtain mercy." — Prov. XXVIII. 13.

Sacramental confession in the sacred tribunal of penance is a divine institution and positive injunction of Jesus Christ; for unless the faithful were positively enjoined to perform this humiliating and painful duty, the pastors of the Church could not possibly execute the commission entrusted to them to forgive and retain sins; they could not come to a knowledge of the cause on which they are to decide, nor to pronounce judgment and just sentence, nor to prescribe suitable remedies and preservatives against sin, nor to give the necessary and proper advice to sinners, unless they were to be acquainted previously with the true state of their conscience by their confession.

The same law that obliges us to confess our sins, obliges us also to examine our conscience, to take a serious view of our soul, and to use a moral diligence in discovering what sins we are guilty of in thought, word, deed or omission. In an affair of such consequence it is necessary to proceed with deliberate attention, and with as much circumspection and composure of mind as reason and prudence require that a person should proceed with in other matters of great importance. It is not

sufficient to take a superficial and cursory view of the outward, gross and palpable sins which are observable to every eye; but the inward spiritual sins, which pride and self-love, human respect and personal interest are most solicitous to hide and keep undiscovered, should be closely inspected, because they are often more dangerous and inflict deeper wounds than the notorious and scandalous sins which are openly committed. The secret recesses and folds of the heart must be closely looked into and searched, and the wounds of the soul must be probed to the bottom, in order to dislodge the corruption and venom that lurk within. The principles and motives upon which a person has acted must be carefully weighed, and an impartial inquiry is to be made into our thoughts and desires, intentions and inclinations, evil habits and customary failings, darling passions and favorite vices.

Unless a diligent self-examination of this kind be made, we will always remain a mystery to ourselves and strangers to the real state of our souls. Quick-sighted enough to observe the failings of others, we are apt to be blind to our own faults; or as Holy Scripture expresses it, we discern the mote in the eye of our neighbor, but do not perceive the beam in our own eye. This interior blindness must be removed and remedied by diligent self-examination, and by humbly and fervently beseeching the Holy Ghost to open our eyes, to remove the evil that hides us from ourselves.

We should allow ourselves sufficient time to dive into the secrets of our conscience, and to consider what places, what persons, what companies we

have frequented; in what conversations, actions and occupations we have passed the time; in what particulars we have deviated from rectitude; in what manner we have discharged the duties which we owe to God, to our neighbor and to ourselves, that we may be able to lay all our sins at the feet of Jesus Christ, with the number, as near as can be recollected, and the circumstances which alter the nature of the sin, or notably aggravate the guilt. There is reason to apprehend that many confessions are defective in this regard, and perhaps null and void, for want of a diligent self-examination. How many seem at a loss even for sufficient matter for sacramental absolution at the very time when, if they did but take the trouble of making a close examination of the true state of their souls, they would discover themselves to be in a very alarming condition.

To pass over in silence many other defects and abuses which should be carefully avoided in the sacred tribunal, some, instead of accusing themselves with candor, sincerity and humility, endeavor to extenuate their sins with studied excuses and artful palliations. Others confess their sins by accusing their neighbor and throwing the fault on others, and inventing excuses for themselves. Study carefully to avoid these and similar faults; in short, remember the lesson of the catechism: Confession must be humble, sincere, plain, true, faithful, entire and accompanied with an inward grief of the heart, hatred of sin and a firm purpose of amendment, this being the very soul and essence of repentance.

Contrition, or an inward sorrow, is so essential a part of the sacrament of Penance, that the most complete confession will not purify the soul if it be wanting. It is to be dreaded that many persons deceive themselves in this point, and approach the sacred tribunal without that true sorrow of heart which is absolutely essential to repentance. They persuade themselves that they are penitent, provided they perform certain exterior exercises of penance, recite some devout forms of prayer, without working any real conversion or change of their hearts. How often, alas, are the feelings of nature, the workings of pride and self-love, the agitations of a false shame and confusion, the anxiety and trouble that proceed from mere human respect and servile fear mistaken for the substance and essence of a true repentance!

The contrition that qualifies the repentant sinner for the remission of his sins is an emotion excited by grace and proceeding from the operation of the Holy Ghost. It is *interior* and *supernatural*. It is grounded on motives of faith and religion. It springs from the love of God, which alone is able to banish the love of sin from the heart. It is *universal*, that is, it extends itself without exception to every mortal sin a person is guilty of. It is also *supreme* and *sovereign*; that is, it is in reality greater than and above all sorrows; for as sin is the greatest of all evils, it must be hated and abhorred more than any other evil.

True contrition moreover includes a firm purpose of amendment, with a will and desire to satisfy God's justice by leading a new life and

bringing forth worthy fruits of penance. By a firm purpose of amendment is meant a fixed resolution, a full determination of the will never more to offend God by mortal sin, but to atone for the past offences, to repair the injuries done others in their property or character, and to shun the places, the occasions and objects of sin, with all other dangerous circumstances leading thereto.

This, then, the nature and qualities of that contrition with which your confession ought to be accompanied, and which we should use our utmost endeavor to procure by sending up for this end our humble and fervent prayers to God. For in vain do we approach the tribunal of confession, in vain do we candidly acknowledge our sins, in vain does the minister of God pronounce absolution unless we are disposed to receive it by heartfelt sorrow.

Another essential part of confession is *Satisfaction*, by which we mean that reparation which the sinner is bound to make for his offences committed against God, and for the wrong he has done to his neighbor. —We are under the strictest obligations to satisfy an offended God, and although the guilt and eternal punishment of sin is remitted by absolution, yet there is still remaining a temporal satisfaction to be made either in this or in the next life. Hence, according to the Council of Trent, confessors are bound "to enjoin salutary and suitable penances, according to the magnitude of the sin, and the circumstances of the penitent, for fear that by treating sinners with too great leniency, and imposing on them slight penances for great sins, they may be held accountable for the sins of others."

(Sess. XIV.) — If, however, the slight penance that your confessor gives you appears too great, remember that God is just, that you will suffer far greater pains in the next life, and that with a different and easier penance you would soon fall back into your former sins. Should you, however, have a valid excuse, or should there exist an impossibility preventing you from performing the penance imposed, you must state the reasons to your confessor, and ask to have it changed. — As to the satisfaction due to our neighbor, it is obvious from the nature of the sacrament of Penance, that we must be willing to make restitution, if we have wronged him in his goods of fortune or in his good name.

For many Christians, if they are really desirous of a sincere and thorough conversion, it is necessary to make a *general confession;* and to others it is highly important, in order to lay the foundation of a pious Christian life.

A general confession is one in which the penitent reviews the confessions of his past life; accusing himself sincerely and with a contrite heart of all the sins which he has committed, either from his youth up, or since his first mortal sin, or since the time when he first made a bad confession, or one which he has good reason to fear was bad. St. Francis de Sales, that great saint and most amiable master in the spiritual life, says, "that for the greatest part of men a general confession is necessary to secure the soul's salvation. A general confession gives us a more complete knowledge of ourselves; it fills us with a salutary shame at the

sight of our sins; it relieves the mind of much anxiety, and gives the conscience true peace; it excites in us good resolutions; it shows us how wonderful is the mercy of God, which has waited for us with great patience; it enables our confessor to give us more suitable directions; it opens the heart, so that in future we are able to make our confessions with more confidence."

The great advantage of a general confession is to be seen at the hour of death. Who would not wish, when at the point of appearing before the tribunal of God — at that dreadful moment which is to decide his fate for all eternity — who would not wish then, that he had faithfully and penitently made a general confession of his whole life? What a consolation for a dying Christian if, before sickness attacked him, he had thus already put in order the affairs of his soul? How can any one allow himself to approach that last moment, remaining still careless for the salvation of his soul? How awful for him, then first to open his eyes upon his whole past life when he is about to close them forever! Our Saviour says, "Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour." (Matth. XXV. 13.) "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching." (Luke XII. 37.)

If, then, Christian soul, you see that it would be useful for you to make a general confession, do not delay, but set about it with promptitude and courage. But if this general confession is not only useful, but even necessary, let no obstacles deter you from making it sincerely and con-

tritely according to your best ability. And if human weakness shrink at the seeming difficulty of a good confession, remember the mercy of God. He came not to call the just, but the sinners to repentance. If, like the prodigal son, we say in our heart, "I will rise and go to my Father," He will behold us when we are yet afar off; He will come to meet us, He will embrace us and give us the kiss of peace. A momentary confusion, a short humiliation before the minister of God, who holds the place of Jesus Christ; will deliver us from the stings of remorse, which will be succeeded by interior peace and consolation. And in heaven — "there shall be joy upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance." (Luke XV. 7.)

PRAYER.

O Lord Jesus! Give me grace, I beseech Thee, to approach Thy sacred tribunal with the necessary dispositions, and to partake of the wonderful effects of Thy infinite bounty. I bless and praise Thy holy name for having spared me so long, and for giving me time to repent, instead of casting me off in the midst of my sins, as I deserved. By the same mercy I implore Thee to grant me a true and sincere contrition, that I may deplore my past sins in the bitterness of my soul, and that tears of compunction may flow from my eyes and wash away my iniquities. In Thee I place all my confidence, and through Thy merits I hope to be ranked on the last day in the happy number of those who are to be united with Thee for all eternity. Amen.

Spiritual Reading.

XIX.

Vigilance.

Of all the evils we inherit from nature, our weakness is the greatest. It is so great, that we sleep over the dangers that surround us. This miserable condition of our nature made St. Paul exclaim, "I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin." (Rom. VII. 23.) No man is free from this inclination to evil. Mortification and a constant watchfulness may indeed subdue, but will not eradicate it.

This is our situation. It made Job call "the life of man upon earth a warfare" (Job VII. 1.), a war the more doubtful, because carried on against mighty invisible enemies; the more laborious, because every victory we gain is a conquest made by and against ourselves; a war wherein we may conquer to-day and be conquered to-morrow. Hence we are cautioned by the Apostle "to work our salvation with fear and trembling" (Philip. II. 12.), or, in the words of our Divine Redeemer Himself, to "watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation." (Matth. XXVI. 41.)

The obligation of vigilance is of a two-fold nature; first, to resist and conquer the dangers that are inseparable from our state of life; and secondly, to guard against those dangers that are not connected with our duty. The Holy Ghost warns us not to expose ourselves to any danger but what arises from our duty, "He that loveth danger

shall perish in it." (Eccli. III. 27.) Now it is loving danger, to seek it or allow ourselves to be drawn into it without necessity or reason, merely to gratify a vain curiosity, oblige a friend or to follow the customs of the world. What follows? The loss of God's grace here, and of the soul hereafter. For without God's grace we cannot escape the dangers that surround us everywhere. "Without me you can do nothing" (John XV. 5.), says Our Lord, and this grace He has not promised to presumptuousness or rashness. He grants it only for His own glory, or for the good of our souls. When men rush headlong into danger, without any defense but their own weakness, dismal indeed are the effects that follow. Therefore be circumspect; foresee danger and avoid it. Almighty God will not preserve the rash man, or the sinner, from burning amid flames. It is not in our power to avoid all dangers, because some necessarily spring from the constitution of our nature; the evil example, the very show and figure of the world daily solicit us to sin. God permits this, not to bring about, or to be instrumental to our ruin, but, as St. Chrysostom observes, to try our faith, to exercise our virtue and to increase our merit.

Seeing, then, that we must encounter danger, how are we to act? — To submit through fear? No! — To yield when attacked? No: but to encounter, to resist, to surmount. — How? By the grace of God, for "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able." (I Cor. X. 13.) He will, with the temptation, produce in you an increase of strength so that you

may be able to bear it. St. Paul says so, and he further says that Christ Our Lord was tempted in the desert, "for in that, wherein He Himself hath suffered and been tempted, He is able to succor them also that are tempted." (Hebr. II. 18.) This should inspire us with the most undaunted courage to reflect that we fight under the banner of Jesus Christ. He leads us, He combats for and with us, He supports us, and if we prove faithful He will infallibly crown us with success.

Notwithstanding this powerful assistance it is a melancholy but true reflection, that by far the greater number of mankind make no resistance to temptation. They yield because they are tempted. Why not resist? Why not struggle and summon up your forces? Why not banish the dangerous idea, the harmful image from your mind as soon as possible? Why not quit the place, the associations, where your mortal enemy, temptation, is lurking? Why not call on Our Saviour, like David, "O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me" (Ps. LXIX. 2.)?

There are some temptations, it must be owned, too strong and violent to be overcome, except by a special grace from Heaven. Divines say this grace is never wanting to those that ask for it. It is always either given or offered. Hence Our Lord desires us not only to *watch*, but also to *pray*. Watch, to prevent the danger; pray, when it is impending. But if you take none of these precautions, if you neither struggle with the danger, nor avoid the occasion, nor apply to God for help, is it surprising you should fall as often as you do?

Your weakness is great, but the power of God is greater. Have recourse to this power. Fear not the attacks of the evil spirit. Since the passion and death of Christ he is bound up in chains, says St. Augustine, lest he should give too great scope to his malice. He can indeed tempt, but he cannot overcome. Like a furious dog, he can bark and rage; keep at a distance and you are safe. He cannot hurt you.

"Be vigilant", St. Peter admonishes us. If we are not, one negligent step may engulf us in eternal ruin. Put on the armor of faith, and God's grace will ever aid you in this mighty conflict.

Afternoon Conference.

XX.

Causes of Relapse.

"And the last stage of that man is made worse than the first." —
Matth. XII. 45.

Odious as sin is in itself, offensive as it is to God, yet it acquires a considerable accession to its deformity, in proportion to the deliberation with which it is committed. The same sin, committed by different persons, may widely vary in the degree of offence, according to their different degrees of advertence respecting the act they perform. Ignorance will sometimes excuse a person entirely from sin. But he who knows, or ought to know, that the act which he performs is sinful, incurs all the guilt, all the malice of his sin. Such a man, in an eminent degree, is he who relapses into sin after

repentance. He has prostrated himself before the representative of Christ, has acknowledged his transgressions in humble and sincere confession, and has been impressed with all the enormity of his evil habits. The commission of sin, after such a knowledge of its enormity, involves, besides the depravity that is connected with the act, a contempt of God, and a virtual retraction of the sorrow expressed in confession. Relapse, though thus terrible is not uncommon, and it is conducive to our spiritual welfare to examine the causes whence it originates.

The first cause of relapse is the return to the occasions of sin. — Whatever object, of itself or by reason of its circumstances, conveys to the heart dangerous impressions, is called an occasion of sin. These occasions are various, according to the various dispositions and sensibilities of different persons. What induces one man to sin, is not always dangerous to another. Some things, indeed, of their own nature, incline the heart to evil; but, generally, each individual must judge from his knowledge of his own dispositions what will be fatal for him. If, with this knowledge, he voluntarily exposes himself to that occasion, is he not answerable for the evil results that arise from it?

To the objection, that sin often results from diversions, actions, and company in themselves most innocent, there can be no other reply but that occasions of sin, whatever they may be, must be avoided. "If thy eye scandalize thee," says Our Saviour, "pluck it out and cast it from thee." (Matth. XVIII. 9.) And Solomon says, "There is

a way which seemeth just to a man, but the ends thereof lead to death." (Prov. XIV. 9.) The devil lurks under various disguises. His attacks are not made openly. It would render his assaults in vain, were he to show himself in his true form. It is in the moments when we are off our guard, in the hours of relaxation, in congenial company, when the passions are awakened, and the heart is carried along the tide of dissipation, that he makes his approach. Ever watchful, and knowing our particular infirmity, he improves the opportunity when we are courting the occasions that were our ruin before, to cause our relapse.

The most innocent enjoyments in life, if they lead to our spiritual ruin, must be abandoned. The dearest connections, if they interfere with the love of God, must be broken; for in this respect the words of Christ apply to every Christian, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke XIV. 26.) Thus jealous is God of our exclusive love. He will not suffer anything to be for a moment balanced against Him. What though the enjoyments that are a man's ruin be in themselves harmless? What though the company in which he falls into sin be of approved morality? *To him* they are forbidden. Vain are our hopes of escape, vain our best resolutions, vain all our circumspection, vain our prayer for help, as long as we continue to seek those occasions which we know to be dangerous. "He that loveth danger, shall perish in it." (Eccli. III. 27.) Man adheres

very implicitly to this saying of Holy Scripture in what relates to dangers of the body. If any one came near the danger of death in consequence of some imprudence in trusting too much to the strength of his constitution, he seldom fails to be more careful in the future. But the separation from God is not deemed an object deserving greater watchfulness in the future; the death of our soul is not sufficient to convince us of our weakness. Though we are sensible that God is the only object worthy of our love, and though we live constantly in danger of having our love for Him diminished or lost entirely by the familiar habit of hearing and seeing Him offended; though we have been already enstranged from Him, and know by experience the place and occasion, we again walk over the dangerous ground; though still trembling from recent rescue, we are again attracted by the danger, and overcome by it. Of such St. Peter says, "It had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them." (II. Pet. II. 21.) Whence does this weakness originate? From that *neglect of the means* necessary for the perseverance in grace, which is the second cause of relapse.

In our present condition the human heart inclines rather to what is depraved than good. It is impossible, therefore, to persevere in the state of grace without divine assistance. It is from God we are to expect the graces necessary for perseverance. But can we hope for these graces without using the means to obtain them? God owes nothing to man.

He has, nevertheless, bountifully and gratuitously provided everything necessary for his salvation. "What is there," says Our Lord by His prophet Isaias, "that I ought to do more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it?" (Isai. IV. 4.) "Graces," says St. Augustine, "could be given to those who do not ask for them; but God would have us admonished, by our praying for them, from Whom we receive those blessings."

Prayer, therefore is one of the means we must employ. It is a homage due to God, through Whom we are whatever we are. It is an acknowledgment of our dependence on Him, and a means by which we cultivate His friendship, and through which we strengthen our weakness. Can man claim an independence of his Creator? He, who from the cradle to the grave, of whatever condition he be, is indebted for existence to others, lives in mutual dependence on his fellow mortals? Yet, he who neglects to pray virtually says that he stands in no need of God. And can he expect God to shower down graces upon him? He will withdraw His saving hand from the lukewarm, and abandon them to the feeble strength on which they presume. Let us, then, beware of mistaking that calmness of soul which follows a sincere conversion to God, and that internal satisfaction which attends a conscience freed from the load of sin, for a perpetual exemption from the attacks of satan, or even for a respite from his snares. If we slumber the enemy of our souls will be wakeful. Nothing rouses his malice more than to see his evil intentions foiled by repentance. If we allow ourselves to be lulled

into a fatal security, he will seize that favorable moment to regain the place from which penance has dislodged him. "I will return into my house from whence I came out." (Matth. XII. 44.) The practice of virtue admits of no intermission. There is no point whereat to pause. We must either advance or go back. We must either commit ourselves to the guidance of grace, or become the victim of the devil's snares. As he is very vigilant, our endeavors must never be relaxed; and if, after the performance of penance, the self-satisfaction which such an act tends to produce arise in the breast, we must not imagine ourselves secure; we must still "watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation."

But we cannot always be engaged in prayer. Even that portion of our time which remains after we have satisfied the claims of our other duties, will often appear too long to be devoted to that holy exercise. On the manner in which these intervals of leisure are spent, much will depend. For the mind, though it is soon fatigued by too intense an application to any single subject, yet can never be in a total state of rest. It must exert its activity; and if not usefully engaged, it will indulge in vain and sinful reveries. Hence idleness has been represented by all moral writers as the source of a great multitude of spiritual evils. In idle hours our thoughts are sure to turn to those bad inclinations to which we are most prone. It is then that every sinful act is projected.

Nothing can prevent such consequences but to keep the mind occupied in something useful. And

what more agreeable manner of engaging its attention than spiritual reading? We might, at least, expect that leisure and spare hours be appropriated to this salutary exercise. But, alas, even the day appointed by God Himself to be kept holy is spent without its practice; the obligations of Sunday are supposed to be complied with after Mass has been attended, whilst the rest of the day is, at best, devoted to sterile rest. Can such neglect of God be suffered without injuring the soul? It is absurd to suppose it.

But the most efficacious means of preserving grace is the devout reception of the sacraments. The sacraments were instituted for our sanctification, and for the maintenance of our spiritual life. When Christ withdrew Himself from among us, He would not leave us without the means by which we were to follow Him. Aware of the repugnance of human nature to virtue, and of the necessity of a means to preserve us from the evil influence of the deceitful and fatal allurements of the world, whilst He withdrew His corporal presence from us, He chose and promised to be spiritually with us in His sacraments to the end of time. To the sacraments He has attached His graces, and in them displayed His mercy in the most wonderful and mysterious manner, and in the Most Holy Eucharist He has given us Himself, God and man, really and truly, for the nourishment of our soul. In this, what love does He not evince, what bounty! The rest of the sacraments have some particular end; they confer each a particular grace: in the Blessed Eucharist every grace is centred, the Source of grace condescends to become the food of man.

And when we consider that, to fortify us against sin and those occasions of sin which so abound in life, He has instituted a sacrament so wonderful, and has empowered mortal and sinful man to call Him down from His throne of glory by the utterance of the words of consecration, to be a daily sacrifice under the humble forms of bread and wine; what estimate does not this reflection lead us to make of the enormity of sin which such means were adopted to prevent!

That Christ chose to veil His presence under the forms of bread and wine is not without significance. He would have us understand from it that the Most Holy Eucharist was intended for our sustenance, for preserving the soul. As the body is in constant process of consumption, and needs a constant renewal of nourishment, so the soul is constantly awakened either by the unceasing activity of the passions, by the temptations of the devil, or by external assaults upon its resolutions and fortitude; and if, to prolong the short period of human life, unfailing attention to bodily wants be absolutely necessary, how much more is it necessary to furnish the soul with nourishment that is to give permanency to its spiritual life!

In conclusion: It is vain that we flatter ourselves with the hope of recovering God's grace, whilst we are unwilling to remove the occasions of sin, and to use the means of perseverance. Make as many fair promises as you please; form as many fine resolutions as you will, they are not to be relied upon whilst you continue wilfully in the dangerous occasions of sin. By refusing to renounce and

shun the causes of your relapse, and to employ the means of perseverance, you cannot be deemed a true and sincere penitent. In this case it becomes true what Our Divine Saviour says, "And when an unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out. And coming, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is made worse than the first." (Matth. XII. 43—45.)

Evening Meditation.

XXI.

On Hell.

"Come and see the works of God, Who is terrible in His counsels over the sons of men." — Ps. LXV. 5.

The consideration of Hell is a subject on which exaggeration need not to be feared, because it is impossible. The most fervid mind, the most powerful imagination of man in this life never yet pictured to itself its real horrors; they are adequately conceived, alas, only by those who experience them. As to the torments suffered by the damned, let us briefly sum them up, and dwell more at length on the separation from God, and the eternal duration of hell. "Come, then, and see the works of God, Who is terrible in His counsels over the sons of men."

The first notion of Hell is a prison. Once closed on the prisoner, it never reopens; in vain does he look for any outlet, for any escape: an almighty Hand binds him down. The dungeons of this world allow some room to their inmates, some range for motion and action; but the prisoners of Hell are otherwise situated; each one of them is bound down in his own eternal place, deprived of all liberty and power alike to escape his tormentors, to resist their assaults, or to afford himself the slightest relief by a change of position. It is thus man is punished for the misuse of that liberty he prizes so much on earth, but which he so often wickedly perverts.

Then comes that fire so often mentioned in Holy Scripture. Fire, of all elements of this world, is the most inexplicable in its nature, the most terrible in its effects. If such be the fire of this world, created for our use and subjected to our control, it may enable us to conceive another of a higher order, created by God expressly for His vengeance, and endued with the wonderful property of acting as well on the soul as on the body. It is a fire of this kind that the prisoners of Hell are plunged into; they dwell in it as in their element, says the Apostle. It would be some alleviation for the sufferers if the fire which burns them afforded some light; but on the long night of the damned no morning shall ever dawn, no friendly ray shall by any chance wander across their infernal gloom; darkness with all its horrors will wrap up and penetrate all their senses.

Still the condition of the reprobate would not be

utterly desperate, if they suffered in solitude, or at least in such society as is supportable; but the last aggravation of their prison is the company that infects it. This is no other than the infernal spirits, those spirits who, from being once the beautiful inhabitants of heaven, are now become the foul and hideous monsters of the deep, and are therefore depicted to us in Holy Scripture under the most frightful forms. While they themselves continually smart under divine vengeance, they are deputed to exercise it upon others, an office for which they are but too well qualified by their power, their craft and their malignity. They will incessantly haunt the wretched sufferers, allowing them no rest, continually goading and exasperating them, mocking their pains, and stinging them with the most cruel taunts and reproaches.

Nor think that the sufferers in Hell find any solace from their fellows in damnation. They hate and execrate one another, and continually discharge on each other all that bitter but impotent malice with which their souls overflow. And as to those who have been accomplices in sin, they will find in the sight and company of each other a new Hell; they will be to one another implacable furies, and expiate their guilty passion by the most cruel hatred. In a word, conceive a mingled scene of endless discord, war, rage, hatred and revenge, and you will have some idea of this "land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth." (Job. X. 22.)

These are only the main features of Hell. To

complete the picture, we must subjoin to it an accumulation of other circumstances; the groans and curses of the damned, the cruel hunger and thirst never to be alleviated even by one drop of water; the dismal moanings that ever ring there. And when you have put together these circumstances, and whatever of this kind the terrified imagination can invent, do not think you have finished the subject and formed an adequate conception of Hell. No; "come and see the works of God, Who is terrible in His counesls over the sons of men." You have as yet entered into only half its terrors. All that you have hitherto contemplated relates chiefly to the body; but it is the soul that is the seat of pain, and it is there mainly that the justice of God will satiate itself and fix its sharpest arrows.

The human soul is the master-piece of God. Its powers and passions are most wonderful. Observe now two or three of them under the action of Divine justice in the world to come.

Conscience is that power of the soul by which it knows itself; by which it sees what is within it; by which it discerns right and wrong; by which it is happy in innocence and wretched in guilt. As in this life a good conscience is a perpetual feast, so a guilty conscience is an insufferable torment. But if the guilty conscience in this world be painful, it is salutary; it is given rather as a monitor than a tormentor. In Hell, however, its office is not to amend, but to torment. This is what is meant by that singular expression so often used by Our Divine Saviour, "their worm dieth not." (Mark IX. 43.)

Then comes memory to increase this torment; that various and active power, which in life so promptly ministers to our wants and enjoyments. Its sad and single office is now to collect from the past all that can make us miserable. The miserable man in Hell remembers his sins; he remembers the first sin he ever committed; that unhappy day, when his yet free and well-balanced soul wantonly made the fatal transition from right to wrong; he remembers for what a trifle he made the woeful change; how empty, how miserable, how momentary was the guilty pleasure he snatched; how base in itself, how bitter in its fruits. He remembers how, untaught by the severe lesson, he suffered himself to be again deluded, repeated his offence, and at last became familiar with iniquity, persisted in it in spite of conviction, in spite of constant disappointment. Then he remembers all the efforts that were made to recover and save him, all the graces he received from God, all the remorses of conscience within, all the warnings from without, the exhortations of his spiritual guide, the good example of others, the prayers of his friends, all of which he frustrated. He calls to mind the powerful helps which he had in his own hands, prayer, the holy sacraments, special graces. A little exertion, and any one of these would have saved him; a single confession well made, a few fervent prayers, one short act of contrition would have been enough. He had it once in his power, but now it is *too late.* He had the precious moment at his disposal, but he let it slip. He had but to move a finger, and he would have turned aside with ease the immense

load of woe that oppresses him; and now there is no power in heaven or on earth that will ever be able to remove or alleviate it. Then it is that the unhappy wretch hates and curses himself, and acknowledging the justice of his punishment, becomes his own voluntary executioner. His infuriated soul can be compared to nothing better than the fabled reptile which in the fury of its pain is said to turn on itself and sting its own vitals.

Next, imagination rises up to his torment. It represents to him in bitter contrast all that he was created for. It busily paints to him the joys of heaven; it transports him thither, and shows him all the bliss, all the delights of that glorious kingdom, and then cruelly suggests that all this was to be once, if he had pleased, his own; that he was positively created for it, and might have obtained it with the greatest ease; and he has deliberately exchanged it for his own desperate condition. He sees the saints of God, many of them his own acquaintances, his friends and relatives, happy with God, and entirely occupied with their own joys, without the least care or concern for the reprobate who is thus cruelly tormented; or if they ever regard or remember him, approving of his torments, as due to the justice of God, Who is now their only object. Then shall the wretch fall back again in despair upon himself and verify the words of the prophet, "The wicked shall see, and shall be angry, he shall gnash with his teeth and pine away." (P. CXI. 10.) The passions, those springs of the soul, will act upon the sinner, and exert all their force in grinding and oppressing that spiritual

substance which they served to guide and impel before. Fear, the most painful sentiment, will ever haunt him with terrible apprehensions, with horrible imaginings. Sadness will ever steep his soul in the most black and bitter melancholy. Desire will incessantly corrode his heart with insatiate and vain longings, and aversion torture him with horror. Oh, the cruel situation of ever wishing for what can never be, and always hating what must be for ever!

Without dwelling longer on the rest, there is one passion which will serve to illustrate all, as it is the master-principle, and, indeed, properly understood, the sole passion of the heart. — The sinner once loved; he once felt the charm of that sacred and ravishing influence which the love of God exerts; or, at least he loved the creatures of God; he amused, if he could not satiate, his heart with them; he misdirected the tendency, but he felt some of its sweetness. Now, all creatures being withdrawn from him, his soul will violently turn to its natural object, will expand to its Creator all its vast capacity, and be drawn toward Him with a force, of which we shall in vain seek an image in this life; and terrible to think, this all-essential Creator will incessantly mock and repel all its efforts, and with the whole force of His omnipotent arm, bind it down in this state of violence. He may form some idea of this who has ever felt what it is to have the heart torn away from some dear object, if he only conceive that object, instead of being trivial and transient, to be infinitely charming and inestimable; but he will still more correctly im-

agine it, who has had his most ardent affection flung back upon him with terrible contempt by the only object in which his heart was centred. This may give us an imperfect idea of the state of the soul reprobated by God. It was created essentially for good: God is the sovereign good, the only good, the infinite beauty, the source and centre of all love; yet He will not be loved by the reprobate soul, much less will He love it; on the contrary, He repels all its approaches and spurns it forever from Him. Nay, more than this: He becomes Himself its tormentor, and it knows and feels that what it suffers comes from Him; that His pleasure is its pain, and that it is in His hands all the while, in those divine hands so amiable in themselves, but now so terrible, which prepare unseen and inflict all its tortures. Here then, doubtless, it is that occurs that mourning and weeping so often spoken of by Our Divine Redeemer. The unhappy soul, thus flung off from her only good, abandons itself to its anguish and pours out torrents of bitter tears, tears utterly fruitless. God views them with the most perfect indifference, and suffers them to be wept unpitied and unregarded. Then the unhappy soul curses the day of its union with the body; itself becomes a hell more cruel than the one which surrounds it, and is torn with remorse, rage and despair.

Is the picture of Hell now complete? — No; it yet wants its last and most terrible circumstance. What we have hitherto considered is dreadful indeed, yet it can be conceived. It is finite. But to suit an infinite God it must have something of

infinitude about it; and therefore Hell only becomes truly Hell, and completely overwhelming to us, when, collecting together all its torments, we add that they are to last without change, without intermission, without alleviation — *for ever!*

Try to conceive and feel what this means. Make a supposition which has often been made, but has not the less force on that account. Suppose that the injured Creator should make with His suffering creature this hard condition, that from all his floods of tears He would accept and lay by one in a thousand years, till he should have shed enough, not to make a river or form an ocean, but to fill up to the very summit the immense void between heaven and earth. Consider well the terms of the agreement: what kind of grace does this seem to you? The oldest inhabitant of the land of desolation would yet but have shed six tears — six tears against an ocean! The term surely could never arrive; this is but another idea for eternity itself.— You are mistaken! The time would certainly come; the time would come when he would first see half of his immense task completed. Then he would achieve another half of the still immense remainder; and at last the time would come when the unhappy wretch would exult to see the immeasurable ocean just swelling to its full accomplishment and only one tear wanting to complete its level! — And would not God then, do you think, a God of infinite love, He Who once died for man, would He not then, at least, begin to relent, and make some allowance for all the suffering? No; not the slightest! The supposition is a fiction, and it will never

be realized. Begin again, unhappy sufferer! Weep afresh, and when thou shalt have shed oceans of oceans of tears, thou wilt still have labored in vain: thy eternity will still be entire; God will live forever, and thou wilt be tormented forever, *forever*, FOREVER!

O Eternity, who ever yet considered thee aright? And who that ever thought of thee seriously could dare sin? — Will, then, a God of unbounded goodness and mercy see His once beloved creature in endless misery and torture and never relent? — Never! — Is it possible that a God of infinite compassion, Who from the sinner on earth would accept a single prayer or tear in atonement for all his sins, can see all this vast series of suffering and not relent? — He *never* will; it is *certain* that He never will. — Such is the malice of sin!

Cherish as the greatest of treasures, and prize as the most solid of all principles, in opposition to the spirit of the world, that salutary fear of God, which is so often pointed out to you as the beginning of wisdom; being assured that we all stand in need of it for salvation; that God is inscrutable in His judgments; that many will come in that place of woe who once never expected it; that many have ended ill who began well, as some have ended well who began ill; that final perseverance is a grace of God which He owes to no man, and that he only can justly hope for it who, to the last, works out his salvation in fear and trembling.

PRAYER.

O Great and Omnipotent God, Who hast in Thy hands the keys of Death and Hell, how terrible art

Thou to Thine enemies! How dare I offend a God Who can throw both my body and my soul into hell! I have sinned, and thereby become liable to eternal damnation, but Thy mercy has waited for my penance. O Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world: Jesus, have mercy on me! Let not the fruit and merits of Thy sacred passion and death be lost on me. "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy! Turn away Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Cast me not away from Thy face, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me!" Amen.

Points of Meditation for next Morning.

XXII.

Recapitulation.

"Fear ye Him, Who after He has killed, hath power to cast into hell."—
Luke XII. 5.

1. *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* (Hebr. X. 31.)—If a person were to hold you by the hair of your head over a fiery abyss full of serpents and scorpions, would you dare at the same time to offend and provoke that person?—And yet you offend and provoke God Who, if He should withdraw His hand from you, would permit you to fall into a still more terrible abyss, into the everlasting pit. How long will you continue in the state of those of whom it is written, "They provoke God boldly" (Job XII. 6.)?

2. *Hell is an abyss of fire.*—In Hell all conceivable torments are united as in one centre, where

they exercise their power, influence and bitterness to the utmost. In this fire are gathered the reprobate as so many living corpses, burning but not consumed, tortured without rest, suffering without intermission. "Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matth. XXII. 13.)

3. *To this abyss the reprobate are condemned for all eternity.*—The sentence, "Depart from me, you cursed" (Matth. XXV. 41.), will banish them for ever from God; from God, for Whom they were created, and without Whom their hearts shall never be satisfied. Terrible thought, to be banished from God for all eternity! A God of infinite compassion, Who from the sinner on earth would accept a single prayer or tear in atonement for all his sins, will punish him in Hell for ever, and will never relent! *Never!*

Fifth Day.

Meditation during the Forenoon.

XXII.

On the Sacred Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Christ suffered for us leaving you an example that you should follow His steps."—I. Pet. II. 21.

Our first parents, having forfeited their original innocence, and shut the gates of heaven against themselves and their whole posterity by their disobedience, it became necessary that a victim of infinite dignity should be substituted in our place, in order to appease the wrath of God, and to atone, in the rigor of justice, for the offence and indignity offered to the infinite Majesty of God by sin. The whole creation was not able to furnish such a victim. Wherefore, when four thousand years had elapsed after the fall of Adam, the Eternal Son of the living God, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, became man to be capable of suffering, remaining at the same time God to give an infinite value to His sufferings. He was pleased to choose the small town of Bethlehem for the place of His birth, and the great city of Jerusalem for His passion and death. One single drop of His Precious Blood was sufficient to atone for the sins of a thousand worlds, but, as St. Bernard devoutly remarks, what was sufficient for our redemption, was not sufficient for His boundless charity.

Jesus, "having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end." (John XIII. 1.)

More and more He gave them strong proofs and signal pledges of His love, as He drew nearer to His death.—With what astonishment must the angels have beheld Him prostrate at the feet of His apostles at the Last Supper, washing and wiping them with the most profound humility, and afterwards bequeathing to His Church, by His last will and testament, the inestimable legacy of His own sacred Body and Blood in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist? Retiring then with the three apostles, Peter, James and John, to the garden of Gethsemani, that conflict began, which ended on Mount Calvary. For as the downfall and ruin of mankind had commenced in a garden it was expedient that the reparation and redemption of mankind should likewise commence in a garden, says St. Peter Chrysologus. The garden of Eden had been the first scene of sin; therefore, by a wise disposition of Providence, the garden of Olives became the first stage of our Redeemer's Passion. There His blessed soul underwent an interior martyrdom, and was overwhelmed with sorrow, so that He said to His apostles, "My soul is sorrowful unto death." (Matth. XXVI. 38.) Fainting away under a double conflict, both of mind and body, He prostrated Himself with His face on the ground, and fell into a most painful agony, which caused Him to break forth in a bloody sweat. What chiefly caused this bloody sweat, and preyed most on His loving Heart, was the foresight He had of our base ingratitude, and the loss of numberless souls, which He knew would frustrate the designs of His mercy and perish eternally through their

own obstinacy and perverseness, in spite of all He was to suffer for their salvation.

In this sorrowful condition He betook Himself to prayer, to teach us that prayer is our best and surest resource in time of distress, and a most powerful means to overcome temptation. He prayed with humility, fervor, resignation and perseverance, to set us an example how we are to pray. He addressed His petition to His Heavenly Father three different times, before an angel was sent from heaven to comfort Him in His agony, instructing us thereby that the grace which is seemingly refused in the beginning, is often granted in the end, and therefore, that we are not to despond when we do not immediately obtain our requests, but we are to redouble our fervor, and to continue with an unwearied perseverance to strike at the gate of mercy until it be opened to us. In the meanwhile, the three apostles who had been eye witnesses of His glorious transfiguration on Mount Tabor, and were now become sad spectators of His agony, fell fast asleep, instead of watching and praying, as they had been warned, lest they should yield to temptation. Their sleep, says Eusebius, was a figure of the spiritual lethargy, sloth and indolence of those who are so drowsy in their devotions, so lukewarm in the service of God, so careless in watching and praying with Jesus, that they justly deserve the same reproach He made to Simon Peter, when He found him asleep with his companions, "Could you not watch one hour with me?" (Matth. XXVI. 40.) Alas, how far more diligent and attentive are the children of darkness

in serving their master, than the children of light are in serving God! Whilst Peter and his companions were sleeping, Judas, the unhappy apostate, was vigilant and active in planning the death of Jesus. Avarice induced him to sell his Lord and Master for thirty pieces of silver, betraying Him with a kiss.

Behold your loving Redeemer now in the hands of a furious rabble, armed with swords and clubs. He is dragged from the garden to Jerusalem; He is presented before no less than four different judges, Annas, Caiphas, Pilate and Herod. False witnesses were suborned, groundless and contradictory charges were brought forward against Him; He was questioned by Annas, condemned by Caiphas, tortured by Pilate, mocked by Herod. St. Jerome tells us that one half of what Our Divine Redeemer endured that night, shall not be made known until the day of judgment. In the morning, Jesus was hurried away from the tribunal of Caiphas to the court of Pilate, that the unjust sentence already pronounced by the highpriest might be ratified by him. Pilate, the Roman governor, was conscious of Christ's innocence; he therefore made some weak efforts to rescue him out of their hands and set him at liberty. He sent Him to king Herod, but as Christ gave no answer to his questions and would not gratify his curiosity by working a miracle in his presence, he treated Him with contempt and derision, and sent Him back to the court of Pilate. Pilate then set Christ in competition with a notorious criminal called Barabbas, who was imprisoned for a murder he had committed,

for it was customary every year to discharge a prisoner on the day of the paschal festival, at the option and request of the people, in memory of the deliverance of their forefathers from the bondage of Egypt. He supposed their choice would fall upon Jesus, their most bountiful benefactor, but the ungrateful people unanimously petitioned in favor of Barabbas the murderer, and to crucify Jesus. See what malice is capable of when it has taken possession of the soul. You are filled with indignation thereat, and yet, alas, such is the monstrous choice you make whenever you prefer the gratification of your passions, and the pleasures of sense to the grace and friendship of God.

Pilate at length, being willing to gratify the Jews in some measure, set Barabbas at liberty, and wishing at the same time to preserve Jesus from being crucified, ordered Him to be scourged. The innocent Lamb of God was immediately surrounded by a band of bloodthirsty soldiers. He Who clothes the universe was stripped of His garments, and His virgin body was exposed to the view of the rabble. To break the chains of our sins He suffered His hands to be tied, and permitted the executioners to discharge a volley of lashes on His back, His breast, His arms and His shoulders; every stroke gave Him a wound, every wound a stream of blood. Yet all this was not enough to satisfy the malice of His enemies. They conceived a new barbarity; to add infamy to His sufferings they arrayed Him as a mock king; they covered His shoulders with an old cloak instead of a royal robe; they put a reed in His hand instead of a sceptre, and instead of a

royal diadem they placed on His head a most painful crown of sharp thorns, which they pressed down forcibly, in order to make them penetrate the deeper, and drive them, if possible, into His very brains. What tongue is able to express, what understanding able to comprehend the racking torture which Our Saviour endured from this mock coronation? Well might He say with the prophet, "O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow." Yet He bore all these most excruciating pains with patience in order to purchase for us the crown of glory in heaven.

Our Divine Redeemer being reduced to such a pitiable state, Pilate imagined that His sight would disarm the hatred of His most inveterate enemies so far, at least, as to induce them to desist from demanding His crucifixion. He therefore produced Him to the people, and presented Him to their view, saying, "*Ecce homo*, Behold the man!" See how He is all torn and disfigured, so as scarce to retain the shape of a man. So far were they from relenting or being excited to compassion by this view, that they redoubled their clamor and shouts for His crucifixion. In vain did Pilate expostulate with them on the injustice of shedding innocent blood; in vain also did he attempt to exculpate himself by washing his hands in their presence and declaring he would not concur in so dreadful a crime, yet turning Our Saviour over to His enemies to be crucified.

"And bearing His own cross, He went forth to that place which is called Calvary." (John XIX. 17.)

The cross was a light weight for His charity, says St. Augustine, but it must have been a very heavy and insupportable burden for His body, which was then almost exhausted. It pressed so hard upon His wounds that He began to sink under the load. His enemies perceiving this, and fearing He would expire on the way before they could enjoy the satisfaction of crucifying Him alive, "they found a man of Cyrene, named Simon; him they forced to take up His cross" (Matth. XXVII. 32.), till Jesus at length, with much difficulty, arrived at the end of His painful journey.

Contemplate your Divine Redeemer now, covered with wounds, "a man of sorrows," arrived on Mount Calvary. The executioners did not even allow Him time to breathe, but hastily dragged off His garments, which being pressed into His wounds by the weight of the cross, must have renewed all His wounds and made them to bleed afresh. His sacred body was then thrown down on the ground, and stretched upon the hard bed of the cross without any other pillow to support His head but the thorns with which it was crowned. His hands, which sway the sceptre of heaven, and His feet, which trample upon the powers of hell, were pierced with large nails, which being driven into the tender flesh, forced their way through the centre of the nerves and sinews, the veins and arteries, and caused four copious streams of blood to flow from the four great wounds of His hands and feet. Being thus fastened to the cross with nails, it was raised, amid the shouts of the populace, into the air, and was then suddenly dropped into the place

prepared for it. We may therefore naturally conclude that, as the whole weight of His body was supported by His perforated hands and feet, the wounds must have been widened, His pains redoubled, and His whole frame convulsed with the excruciating torment. There was no part of Him now without its peculiar suffering, says St. Bernard, except His tongue and Heart, and the one was given gall and vinegar to taste, while the other was pierced with a spear by one of the soldiers. This made St. Bonaventure exclaim, "O Longinus, why dost thou wound a heart already wounded with the arrows of divine love?"

In this cruel position Jesus hung alive for the space of three long hours between two robbers, one on His right hand, the other on His left. One of the robbers prayed, repented, and was assured of his salvation with the words, "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." (Luke XXIII. 43.) Whilst He was thus elevated between heaven and earth, as a mediator between God and man, says St. Augustine, He preached charity and patience to us from the pulpit of the cross, and offered Himself to the justice of His Eternal Father as a victim of reconciliation for the whole world, imploring mercy and pardon for us. "Father, forgive them," He said, "for they know not what they do." The blasphemous reproaches and railleries of His enemies were thus answered by a petition for pardon. He thirsted, but His thirst, as St. Augustine says, was a spiritual one for our salvation, rather than the thirst of His parched palate. And having fulfilled the prophecies, and the types and

figures of the Old Law. He recommended His soul into the hands of His Heavenly Father, and exclaiming, "It is consummated," He bowed His head with the most perfect submission, and breathed forth his spirit.

No sooner had Jesus expired, when all nature revolted. A dreadful earthquake ensued, the veil of the temple of Jerusalem, which hung before the sanctuary, was rent from top to bottom, the sun was eclipsed, and the earth was overspread with darkness; the rocks burst asunder, and the tombs were opened; the chief of the guards, who assisted at the execution, astonished at such miracles, loudly proclaimed that Jesus was the Son of God, and many of the spectators returned home striking their breasts with contrition and grief.

Will you alone remain insensible, where all creation mourns? Will you refuse to bathe your Redeemer's wounds with a few penitential tears? And if you do not weep for His cruel sufferings, will you not shed tears for your sins which caused them? Behold the crucifix, the image and memorial of your Saviour. Read this book of the cross, this compendious history of His passion and death with proper attention. Fix the eyes of your soul devoutly on it: *Ecce homo!* Behold the Man of Sorrows! Behold how dear your salvation has been to Him. What return will you make for his incomprehensible love for you? Can you find it in your heart to renew His passion, and crucify Him over again by relapsing into sin? —

"We adore Thee, O Christ, and praise Thee, because by Thy cross and passion Thou hast redeemed the world."

Spiritual Reading

XXIV.

On the Love of God.

"He that loveth not, abideth in death." — I John, III. 14.

It is a settled point of Christian morality, that any man that has not the love of God, can have no pretensions to heaven. For heaven is a reward which God has promised, through Jesus Christ, to all those who fulfill His law. Now as it is the first and greatest commandment of the law to love God with all our hearts, it is plain that if anybody does not love God, he does not fulfill the law, and consequently can have no right to the reward of eternal happiness. "He that loveth not, abideth in death" (I John, III. 14.); that is, he is dead to the grace of God, dead to all hopes of everlasting bliss, and doomed to eternal death. Nothing, therefore, can be more indispensable concerning our salvation, than the love of God, as appears not only from what St. John has said, but from the positive command of Jesus Christ Himself: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind." (Matth. XXII. 37.) Thou shalt love Him in preference to, and beyond anything in heaven or on earth, love Him for His own sake alone, on account of His adorable perfections, and on account of the unspeakable blessings He has poured forth on mankind in general and on yourself in particular.

Can we, in truth and sincerity, say that we have hitherto loved God, or that we love Him even at

present above all things? It is to be feared that we have been deficient in nothing so much as in this. Instead of loving God as we ought to have done, is it not the world, its advantages, its pleasures, its follies, its vanities, we have loved — and loved to distraction? Can anything be more criminal than to be continually transgressing the first and greatest precept of the law, anything more unreasonable than to be continually giving to creatures the love and affection due to the Creator?

We are created for no other end than to love and serve God, from Whom alone we receive all that we possess and all that we are. From God alone can we receive grace in this life and happiness in the next; and yet we have loved every thing except God. It remains therefore that we humble ourselves before Him, acknowledge our past errors, deplore them in the bitterness of our souls, and begin at length to turn all our affections towards that Almighty Being, in Whom they should always have been centred and fixed.

Did we but conceive the virtue and excellence of the love of God, we would certainly use all our endeavors to attain it. One act of the love of God is so excellent, say the masters of spiritual life, that it is capable, if made from a pure motive, of blotting out the greatest sins, and reconciling the greatest sinner to God. This wonderful effect of divine love is grounded on those words of Our Divine Saviour, "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode in him." (John XIV. 23.) Whoever, therefore, loves God,

is loved by Him, and consequently must appear righteous and agreeable in His eyes, which could not be the case if the love of God did not efface all sins and transgressions.

This love, which justifies the greatest sinners in the eyes of God, consists of two parts; the love of preference and the love of benevolence or complacency.

The love of preference consists in loving God above all things, and preferring Him before all creatures in heaven or on earth. For as God is infinitely great and good, He requires that we love Him in a manner worthy of His infinite greatness or goodness. This we can never do but by loving Him more than the whole world besides. If, therefore, you truly love God, you must love Him beyond life itself; for Our Saviour says in the gospel, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." (Matth. X. 37.)

But when have we an opportunity of testifying this love of preference unto God? — As often as the observance of His commandments comes into question; for Our Saviour says, "If any one love me, he will keep my word" (John XIV. 23.), and again, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . This is the greatest and the first commandment." (Matth. XXII. 37, 38.) If you would know whether you possess the love of God required by Christ, or not, see how you observe the law. For instance: An opportunity offers of increasing your gains, but the means are sinful. If you love God

above all things, you will renounce the prospect of gain and prefer the fidelity to God to all the advantages of this world. Or, from your situation in life you may frequently fall in with persons whose demeanor and conversation is contrary to the precepts of virtue: if you love God above all things, you will refuse to humor them, and prefer the fidelity to God to the ways of the world. Or, a man has injured you severely ; it is in your power to revenge yourself upon him : if you love God above all things, you will prefer His love and fidelity to the revenge it is in your power to obtain. In a word were your life at stake, and were it in your power to preserve it by one single sin, you were obliged by the love of preference you owe to God to lay down your very life rather than transgress His holy law.

But, oh, where are these heroic sentiments to be found? Where is the man whose conduct shows that he has the love of God in his heart? — One thing is certain, that any man who has not the love of God in him — that love, which places God and the fidelity to His laws above all the considerations of this world, has no share in Christ, but on the contrary, lives every moment of his life — before God — in a state of reprobation.

Besides this love of preference there is another love we are obliged to have for God: the love of benevolence or complacency; that is, we are obliged to love God with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with our whole mind — not only above all things, but likewise for His own sake, with a pure and disinterested love. Hence, first, we are obliged

in conscience to make acts of this pure and disinterested love immediately after attaining the use of reason; secondly, we are obliged to make them frequently in the course of our life; and thirdly, we are most particulary obliged to make them at the hour of death.

It is lawful, most certainly, to love God on account of the happiness He has prepared for us in the life to come: for a devout soul may serve God on account of the reward; but that is only a secondary motive. We may wish our own happiness, but should still more wish the glory of God and the accomplishment of His holy will. To love Him for His own perfections and because He wills it, should be our principal desire.

To conclude, let the obligation dwell strong in our minds of making frequent and fervent acts of divine love. At least every morning and evening you ought to say, "O my God, I love Thee from all my heart, not because Thou canst make me happy or miserable, but because Thou art my God and my all." Or with St. Augustine, "Too late I began to love Thee, O my God! But now that I know Thee, I know my obligation: I love Thee with all my heart, and will love Thee for evermore."

If we love God, He will love us in return, and not only love us, but show us one day how much He loves us — in the glory of heaven.

Afternoon Conference.

XXV.

On Holy Communion.

Our belief in the real presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist ought to enkindle in our hearts the most ardent desire of frequently uniting ourselves with Him in Holy Communion. What greater consolation, what greater happiness can we enjoy in this vale of tears and place of exile, than to partake from time to time of this divine banquet, this heavenly manna, this spiritual bread of eternal life ?

Of all the spiritual exercises commanded by religion this is the most salutary and consoling. In Holy Communion the afflicted and sorrowful find a Comforter ready at all hours to console them and to alleviate their grievances; here the distressed find a compassionate Father always ready to succor and relieve them; here the sick and infirm find an omnipotent Physician, ready and willing to heal them; here the needy and indigent meet a most bountiful Benefactor and loving Friend, ready to receive their petitions and to grant their requests; here, in short, the faithful in general find a resource in all their infirmities, a consolation and protection in all their wants and tribulations. "Nothing," says St. Chrysostom, "renders Christians more formidable to the powers of hell, than frequent worthy Communion." Nothing contributes more effectually to put the devil to flight, to weaken concupiscence and to imprint a character of purity on the soul. It is a sovereign preservative

against mortal sin, a powerful antidote against venial sins and daily imperfections, as the Council of Trent teaches. It is a shield and armor that enables us to withstand the most violent assaults of temptation.

But these blessed fruits and happy effects of Holy Communion appear only in souls who receive it after due preparation, or with the right disposition. — The first and most necessary disposition of the soul is to be in the state of grace, obtained, if it be wanting, by a true repentance and sincere confession of our sins.

The second disposition is, not only to be free from the guilt of all mortal sin, but to be free from the affection or inclination to all venial sins. By this is meant such a love for them, as makes a person not only to commit them often, but also prevents his endeavors to avoid them, and makes him so insensible of their malice as to regard them as little or nothing. Although the effects of venial sin do not render us absolutely unworthy, or the Communion sacrilegious, yet they diminish its fruits, and impede the full operation of grace in our soul.

The third disposition is to approach Holy Communion with a pure intention. For it is certain that an action however good in itself, may lose its value for the want of a good intention, and may even become evil and vicious, if the intention be such. This being true of all good actions whatsoever, it is still more so of Holy Communion; since it is a contempt of the greatness and sanctity of God to approach Him with any other motive or

intention than that of honoring and pleasing Him, and meriting His grace and favor. In receiving Holy Communion, therefore, our intention must always be wholly pure; that is, our motive for so doing must be the honor and glory of God, and our own salvation. First, to serve and please God the more, and thereby to unite ourselves more intimately with Him, that He may remain in us, and we in Him. Secondly, to promote our own salvation by obtaining, through the means of Holy Communion, all those graces we stand in need of for the correction of our faults, to resist temptations, and to strengthen us in the practice of virtue. It is also good to add to this general intention a particular one according to our necessities; as, for instance, to obtain such and such particular graces, or to advance in some virtue. Hence we must not approach the holy table from any human motives, as for example, from a desire to appear pious; nor from vanity, nor from human respect, lest we should, perhaps, displease any one, or because it is expected of us; neither must we approach merely from custom, or because it is our usual time to communicate.

It is, alas, but too common that one or the other of these motives mixes itself with our otherwise pure intention in receiving Holy Communion.

Now, in order to prepare ourselves for Holy Communion, the first thing we are to do after we have been at confession is to return to Almighty God our heartfelt thanks for the pardon of our sins. It certainly shows a great insensibility or ingratitude to make no return to Him Who has granted us so

great a favor. Then we should turn our mind and apply our whole thoughts to the great act we are about to perform — to make a worthy Communion. To do this, we are to endeavor to excite in ourselves actual devotion, and the most perfect we can, because in this Most Holy Sacrament we receive more or less grace, in proportion to the greater or less devotion with which we receive it.

Then, when the time of our receiving draws near, we ought to endeavor, in great peace and calmness of mind, to increase our devotion, repeating acts of humility, love and desire, grounded in our own unworthiness, and excite in us a pious confidence in the power and goodness of our God, Who can make us worthy to receive Him.

It is not uncommon to hear some persons apologize for their neglect of Holy Communion by saying that they are not worthy to receive it, because they have not the perfection that is requisite. But if they wait until they are worthy — when shall they communicate? Is not a deep sense of our own unworthiness one of the dispositions that are necessary to a good Communion? Is a person not to approach the fire because he is cold? Is a man not to call a physician because he is sick? — St. Francis of Sales tells us that two classes of persons ought to communicate often — the perfect and the imperfect: the former, because being well disposed, they wrong and prejudice their souls by keeping from the source of all perfection, and by depriving themselves of the signal blessings and manifold graces which are derived from it; the latter, in order to obtain spiritual strength, to improve in the love of God, and to learn to communicate well.

Come, then, and partake often of this delicious banquet of your Saviour's love! Come to this great Supper and heavenly feast of the spotless Lamb! He calls you, He invites you, He solicits you in these affectionate words, "Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (Matth. XI. 28.) Come with an ardent desire of being united with Him. Come with spiritual hunger and thirst, and be refreshed. Come with great purity of conscience, clothed with the wedding garment of charity and the white robe of innocence, free from all stains of mortal sins! Give your heart entirely to Him Who gives Himself entirely to you in this adorable Sacrament: united with Him on earth, you will be for ever united with Him in heaven.

Evening Meditation.

XXVI.

On Heaven.

> "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." —
> I. Cor. II. 9.

It is certain that our imagination cannot be carried too high when we think or speak of that glorious heavenly palace, where the King of kings and the Lord of lords appears in His majesty, and discovers Himself in the fulness of His glory to the heavenly hosts and angelic choirs. The blessed there see God face to face, as He truly is in Himself. "We know that when He shall have come,

we shall be like to Him, since we shall see Him as He is." (I John III. 2.) — "We see now as through a glass darkly, but then face to face: we know now in part, then we shall know as we are known." (I Cor. XIII. 12.) The light of glory is a certain quality infused into the intellect by which it is made fit and able to see God. This light is only given to the blessed in heaven.

As the knowledge and possession of the highest good is the essence of beatitude, the happiness of the saints consists in this clear vision of God and intimate, inseparable union with Him by which they enter into the fruition of what they love as the highest perfection, and are more sensible of His divine presence than we are of the presence of those whom we look upon with our eyes. O happy souls! What can be wanting to satisfy their desires and complete their joy when they thus have within and without them all that is rich, grand and beautiful in creation, and behold its Divine Author face to face? This, too, with an absolute certainty that it shall be as lasting as the endless eternity! Thousands of years pass away there like a day, and each day gives them the joy of a thousand years.

Must we not be insensible to the last degree if we forfeit such unspeakable bliss for a sordid interest, for a vile pleasure in sin? Oh, let us remember that we are created for a nobler end, born to higher hopes, and invited to a glorious state of immortality. Did we but make it our object to consider attentively what it is to dwell for ever in Heaven with God and His angels and saints, to

praise everlastingly the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, the Fountain of all goodness, to live in perpetual ecstacies and raptures of joy and love, such pious reflections would make us blush at our past indifference, negligence and tepidity; and cause a holy ardor to glow in our hearts. They would inspire us with vigor and activity in the service of God, sweeten every toil and labor, and make all trials and troubles easy for us, for everything appears light and pleasant to him who has Heaven with its endless and incomprehensible joys always in view.

It was the blessed prospect of Heaven that sweetened the rigorous austerities, fasts and mortifications of thousands of saints, and that turned the fire and sword of martyrdom into consolation for the martyrs. The hope of reigning eternally with Jesus Christ in Heaven sweetened the bitter chalice of their suffering; it supported them in their severe trials, made every labor seem light, every pain easy, and rendered death, in its most terrifying shape, desirable and acceptable to them.

Let us, then, take courage, and suffer with constancy for a little while, that we may be happy for ever with our God. Think of heaven! In the words of St. Francis, "If the labor is hard, the reward is great." Man occupied with the things of earth is unwilling to look up, but willingly condemns himself to be buried in the darkness of this world without the sunny rays of a comforting hope, a hope so beautiful that man's indifference to it is incomprehensible. What is the reward? The perfection of being, the being filled with the knowledge

of God, the eternal companionship of Mary and of the saints and angels! How can our hearts, naturally so covetous, be indifferent to such a prize? — Think of heaven! It is the rainbow of promise after the storm, the oasis in the desert, the rest for the weary traveller. Heaven! Do you understand what it is? — The kingdom of God, the storehouse of His treasures! We cannot conceive it, but we know that we possess three craving faculties, knowledge, love and action, and that there alone they shall be satisfied. In Heaven alone we shall understand the decrees of Providence. Now we see only indistinctly the effects, then we shall understand cause and effect. What can rouse us from our insensibility, if this thought does not? — If the labor deters us, let the great reward animate us. Let us remember that the labor is short, the recompense eternal; that Heaven is worth infinitely more than we are able to do or suffer for it. All our pretended difficulties and imaginary troubles will vanish if we keep present to our minds the thought of eternal glory. They that have attained Heaven were once men like ourselves, surrounded with as great, perhaps greater difficulties, subject to the same weakness, the same dangers, the same temptations. We have the same helps, the same hopes, the same reward proposed. True, "the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence" (Matth. XI. 12.), but we are not left alone; the grace of God is offered to us, and enables us to triumph. If we only were to regulate our exertions for the attainment of Heaven by those which we exhibit in the pursuit of our worldly affairs — how confidently might we

look forward to the result! Let us exert ourselves day by day to grow in virtue and grace, that we may at length attain to the beatific vision of Almighty God!

PRAYER.

O God of all goodness and all glory! Give me grace, I beseech Thee, to comply with the conditions on my part, in order to be entitled to eternal happiness. Strengthen my faith, increase my hope, inflame my charity, and grant me the gift of final perseverance, that being enriched with the treasures of Thy grace here, I may rejoice in the possession of Thy glory hereafter. Amen.

Points of Meditation for Next Morning.

XXVII.

Recapitulation.

"Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." — Matth. V. 12.

1. *Heaven is the place of God's glory*, and the home of the angels and saints. In Heaven, the Kingdom of God, the saints will enjoy perfect beatitude forever. Beatitude is a state of perfect happiness arising from the possession of the supreme good — God. "This is eternal life, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." (John XVII. 3.) In heaven faith is consummated in sight; hope in possession, and love in fruition.

2. *Heaven is our eternal reward.* In it, God Himself is our "reward exceeding great." (Gen.

XV. 1.) And in God we shall enjoy a beauty, a splendor and a magnificence in heaven, which no tongue can describe. St. Paul tells us that there are such transcendent glories there "as eye hath not seen"; such transports of pleasure "as ear hath not heard"; such fulness of joys "as the heart of man cannot conceive." — "Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God!" (Ps. LXXXVI. 3.)

3. "*The kingdom of God suffereth violence.*" Yet, though all the miseries and sufferings that ever befell the whole of mankind were centered in one person, if in the end he gains the glory of heaven, he must be pronounced happy. — Take a serious view of that mansion of bliss, and nothing will be able to shake your constancy, or prevail on you to depart from your duty. Raise your thoughts frequently above this world, and ascend in spirit into that Land of Promise, which Our Blessed Redeemer purchased for us at the expense of His Most Precious Blood.

Sixth Day.

Meditation during the Forenoon.

XXVIII.

On the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

"Do this for a commemoration of me."—
Luke XXII. 19.

The Apostle reminds us, that "Christ hath loved us and hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God." (Ephes. V. 2.) In the sacrifice of the cross He offered Himself up for us in a bloody manner; in the holy sacrifice of the Mass He offers Himself up in an unbloody manner: so that the sacrifice of the Mass is one and the same in substance with the sacrifice of the cross, differing only in the manner of the offering.

Briefly consider the dignity and sanctity of this sacrifice, and the manner of assisting thereat.

To form some idea of the dignity and sanctity of Holy Mass, we need but consider the dignity of the victim that is offered, the sanctity of the High Priest Who offers it, and the sacred mysteries of Our Saviour's passion and death which are represented therein.

The holy sacrifice of the Mass, in itself, and as offered by Jesus Christ, is always a most acceptable oblation in the sight of God, independent of the good or bad disposition of the minister who performs the outward and visible part of its offering.

The principal excellence of Holy Mass consists in its being essentially, and in the very highest degree, identical with the sacrifice which was offered

on the cross of Calvary. The sacrifice on Calvary was the instrument of redemption; the sacrifice of the Mass puts us in its possession: the one threw open the treasury of the merits of Christ Our Lord; the other affords the practical use of that treasury. And, therefore, observe that in Mass there is not made a mere representation, nor a simple commemoration of the passion and death of our Our Divine Redeemer, but there is performed, in a certain true sense, the selfsame most holy act which was performed on Calvary. It may be said, with all truth, that in every Mass Our Redeemer returns mystically to die for us, without really dying, at one and the same time really alive and as it were slain: "I saw a Lamb standing as it were slain." (Apoc. V. 6.) In Holy Mass there is made no simple representation of a bygone event, but the self-same sacrifice is unbloodily made which, with the shedding of the blood, was made upon the cross. That same body, that same blood, that same Jesus Who then offered Himself upon Calvary, now offers Himself in Holy Mass. Oh most awful, solemn and stupendous sacrifice!

In so great a sacrifice three things attract consideration: the Priest who offers, the Victim offered, and the majesty of Him to whom the offering is made. Now mark the marvellous grandeur of Holy Mass, in virtue of each of these three considerations.

The Priest Who offers is the Man-God Christ Jesus; the Victim is the Life of God; nor is it offered to any other than unto God. Rekindle, then, your faith, and recognize the true celebrant

to be not so much the human priest as the adorable person of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the primary offerer, not only because He has instituted this holy sacrifice, and has given to it all its efficacy through His merits, but also because in each Mass He Himself deigns for our good to transubstantiate the bread and wine into His most holy body and into His most precious blood. Behold, then, the chiefest privilege of Holy Mass, to have for priest God made man; and when you see the celebrant at the altar, know that his highest dignity consists in being the minister of that invisible and eternal Priest, Our Redeemer Himself. Hence it results that the sacrifice itself does not cease to be agreeable to God, although the priest who celebrates may be wicked and sacrilegious, seeing that the principal offerer is Christ Our Lord, and the priest is His mere minister. Blessed, then, be God, Who has bestowed on us a holy, a most holy Priest, Who offers to the Eternal Father this divine sacrifice.

In Holy Mass the Victim is God. For as it was Christ Who offered Himself, and Who was offered upon the cross, so in like manner it is Christ Who offers Himself and Who is offered on the altar by the hands of the officiating priest, who acts under Him as His visible substitute, and who, therefore, when he comes to the consecration, speaks and acts, not in his own name, or by his own authority, but in the name and person of Christ, saying, "This is my body; this is the chalice of my blood." The oblation that is here made, is also accompanied with a real change and destruction of the inward

substance of the bread and wine, and with a real presenting of the body and blood of Christ, our Victim, under appearances which denote His real death.

Holy Mass is a sacrifice offered to God. The first obligation by which we are bound to God is to honor Him. By Holy Mass Almighty God is honored as He deserves, because He is honored by that God Himself, that is, by Jesus, Who placing Himself in the character of a Victim on the altar, with an act of inexplicable submission, adores the Most Holy Trinity, even as it is adorable, in such a manner that all other acts of homage, by all other beings, vanish before the face of this self-humiliation of Jesus, as stars before the sun. Jesus, being not only man, but omnipotent God, by humiliating Himself on the altar, offers in that act of humiliation to the Most Holy Trinity homage and honor infinite, so that we who join with Him in offering the great sacrifice attain, through Him, to the privilege of rendering an infinite homage and honor to God.

Holy Mass is a most agreeable Holocaust, by which the most perfect homage is paid to God. For though, of ourselves, we are incapable of paying Him an homage proportionate to His greatness, we are, because Jesus Christ offers Himself for and with us, enabled to render unto God the greatest homage, adoration and glory that any creature can possibly give to his Creator.

Holy Mass is a most agreeable sacrifice of thanksgiving, for though all the thanks we can render are inadequate in themselves as proceeding from us,

yet because Jesus Christ, Whose dignity is infinite, puts Himself, in Mass, in our place, and gives infinite thanks to His Eternal Father for us and in our name, we have a gift of infinite value to offer to God, and are thus enabled to make Him an adequate return for the benefits conferred on us.

Holy Mass is a sacrifice of impetration. For though of ourselves we are undeserving of any favor, yet because Jesus Christ offers Himself up with us and for us, in order to obtain for us the favors and graces we stand in need of, we have here a most efficacious means to sanctify our petitions and render them acceptable in and through His merits. Therefore St. Chrysostom says, that of all times the time of the sacrifice of Mass is the most advantageous to implore the grace of God, because the body and the blood of Jesus Christ are then actually upon our altars, where His sacred blood pleads for us, the virtue of which is infinite, and its voice all-powerful to obtain whatever we desire; for what can God refuse when we offer Him a God in return for what we ask? —

Holy Mass is a sacrifice of propitiation for the living and the dead. Here Christ renews the death He suffered on the cross, mystically indeed and in an unbloody manner, but none the less really, and thereby moves His Heavenly Father to have mercy on us and to receive us into favor, which He will never fail to do, when we accompany the Victim of our reconciliation with the inward sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart and a true repentance.

By Holy Mass the graces which Christ merited for mankind by His death, are actually applied to

and particularly bestowed on the souls of those who are present at this holy sacrifice, or for whom it is offered in particular, in such manner and proportion as their wants require, and as their greater or less dispositions make them capable of receiving. Well may we, therefore, kiss our altars, perfume them with incense, and, what is more, honor them with the utmost reverence and awe.

Summing up all these singular benefits of Holy Mass, will we have a difficulty in believing that one single Mass — speaking of its intrinsic worth — is of such efficacy as, according to various learned and holy theologians, might have sufficed to obtain the salvation of the whole human race? But this divine sacrifice avails not only for the living, but also for the dead. It is for them the great act of supplication for their liberation. O blessed Mass, at once assisting the living and the dead! In order, then, to be stirred to compassion for the souls in Purgatory, remember that the fire in which they suffer is, according to the opinion of St. Gregory the Great, no less painful than that of hell, differing from it only in its limited duration. Still more, deprived as they are of the beatific vision of God, they experience, as St. Thomas says, an intense and vivid desire to behold the Supreme Good, and this is not permitted to them. Holy Mass relieves and releases these Suffering Souls: who could be so hard-hearted as not to apply its benefits to them?

Having thoroughly pondered the excellence of Holy Mass, wonder at the blindness in which you lived till now, having formed no right estimate of a treasure which has for you too much remained,

as it were, hidden and buried. Judge for yourself how culpable you must be if you make vain excuses to palliate your coldness and indifference towards it; if you assist at it more from custom than from a true love of God and sincere devotion; if you even commit irreverences at the foot of the altar, and speak to God with as much carelessness and distraction as if you intended to affront Him; if your chief prayer is for temporal blessings and not for your spiritual necessities; if you are, instead of an humble petitioner, a frivolous spectator of this august mystery.

The very nature of this holy sacrifice demands that we should assist at it with great reverence, attention and devotion. We should be present at it with the most exalted idea of the greatness of God, and with the most humble sentiments of our own weakness; we should go to it as if we were going to the Mount of Calvary, to be present at the crucifixion and death of Our Lord. We should form a proper intention, and propose to ourselves the same great ends for which this sacrifice was instituted and is offered every day by the Church, namely to honor, adore and glorify God; to give Him thanks for all His favors and benefits; to obtain from Jesus Christ the virtues, gifts and graces we stand in need of; to appease the wrath of God, to supplicate for the pardon of our sins, and to renew the memory of Our Blessed Saviour's passion and death.

Renew, then, the holy resolution to hear from this time forward, as many Masses as you possibly can, and, above all, with due devotion.

Spiritual Reading.

XXIX.

On the Exercise of the Presence of God.

According to the Apostle St. Paul it is the Christian's privilege to have his conversation in heaven: "Our conversation is in heaven." (Philip. III. 20.) This is, moreover, our duty; for as heaven is our end, we are bound to aspire to it. Among the many ways in which this privilege and duty can be exercised, the pious habit of always walking in the presence of God is one of the foremost.

As this holy and practical exercise has immediate reference to God, it implies, in the first place, acts of those three theological virtues, which have God directly for their object. The presence of God, then, of which our belief in God's existence assures us, does not mean simply that God is always present with us; but it means an act, on our part, by which we make ourselves mindful of that presence; an act, by which we are present with Him in our thoughts and affections. We must take steps towards carrying out in reality what we admit in theory.

What we must, therefore, habituate ourselves to do is, in every place, and in every action we are performing, to recognize God as being close to our side. "Behold as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters, as the eyes of the handmaid are on the eyes of her mistress: so are our eyes unto the Lord our God until He have mercy on us." (Ps. CXXII. 2.) God is in reality closer to us than any other being; but our habitual fault is,

that we allow creatures to intervene and to occupy the place which really belongs to God. How often may we not have reason to censure ourselves in the words of the patriarch Jacob, and say, "Indeed the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." (Gen. XXVIII. 16.) In the spiritual world as in the material world a real void is not to be found. When the creature is driven out, God is ready to enter in; and He then occupies the place nearest to our heart, and we find ourselves at rest with Him. Thus we may practically carry out this holy exercise and make our conversation to be in heaven.

This exercise has many and great advantages. The first advantage is, that such a practice duly persevered in will make sin an impossibility to us. For how could we dare to sin, when we are fully aware of the fact that God is present witnessing our action? It is in order to sin more freely that the infidel denies in his heart the existence of the God Who is to judge him, and that he removes God from his sight and from his thoughts. But he that is wise does not attempt to close his eyes against a fact which cannot be denied, which is equally true whether it be remembered or forgotten. "If you wish to sin," says St. Augustine, "try to find out a place where God cannot see you, and there do what you will." But where can such a place be found?

A second advantage of the exercise of the presence of God is, that its recollection is a great encouragement under every temptation. As servants are most faithful and active in their work when their master's eye is upon them, so must we ever assure ourselves that in our labors and in the trials to

which our fidelity may be exposed we are not alone, but He for Whom we are laboring, and in Whose cause we are struggling is close at hand, ready to reward us if we persevere in our duty, but a witness to our disloyalty if we fall.

Another great advantage of this holy exercise is, that it helps us most effectually in the duty of prayer. Prayer, of its very nature, implies an act in which we are conversing with God and are therefore engaged in His presence. If we made it our study to think at all times of this holy presence, we should not find it such an effort to keep our thoughts fixed on God during prayer. The reason why our mind wanders so much is because we do not remember that God is with us and we with Him. Try to be more collected out of the time of prayer, and you are sure to be less distracted during it.

Finally, the exercise of the presence of God gives us a foretaste of heaven. What constitutes the happiness of heaven is the presence of God in the kingdom of His glory. If we, by cultivating this exercise, live in His presence, is not our conversation also in heaven? Our life here below is intended by our good and merciful Creator to resemble our life in that happy eternity for which He has destined us. We are made to possess God hereafter, but He wishes us to possess Him also here below: now less perfectly, then more completely, as we can see Him now in a dark manner, then face to face. It is in the exercise of the presence of God that we will in one way be anticipating our future privilege. By exercising and persevering in it we will find out its many advantages and blessings.

Afternoon Conference.

XXX.

On Charity.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you." — John XV. 12.

When Our Blessed Saviour came into this world, He found the virtue of charity very little practised among mankind; even so that He ordered it as a *new* commandment: "A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another, as I have loved you." (John XIII. 34.)

Charity, or the love of our neighbor, comprises every duty relating to mankind, and consequently is an obligation so strict, that unless it is fulfilled, we cannot hope to enter heaven. To understand this, we must remember that we cannot attain eternal happiness without loving God above all things. This, however, is not possible without loving our neighbor. "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?" (I. John, IV. 20.) So that it follows, that if any man does not love his neighbor, he does not love God. But if, on the other hand, we do love our neighbor, the presumption is in our favor that we also love God; for the love of God and the love of our neighbor are like two links of one chain, which are inseparably united, or like two streams which flow from the same scource.

Were we to consider things in a temporal light, it would be very easy to show that nothing can be more profitable than the great law of charity. Did

we all love our neighbor, who would ever think of offending, much less hurting or destroying his brother? Then the great would never abuse their power, nor the rich their wealth; envy and jealousy would depart from the world; all mankind would live in union, in peace, in possession of the essential comforts of life.

From these temporal considerations, let us now raise our thoughts to things of a more exalted nature — to the spiritual blessings that attend the practice of fraternal charity.

The first of these blessings is the favor and friendship of God. St. John tells us, "If we love one another, God abideth in us, and His charity is perfected in us." (I John, IV. 12.) Nothing can be more comforting than this assurance of the apostle. St. Peter exhorts us, "But before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves: for charity covereth a multitude of sins." (I Pet. IV. 8.) Where is the man who is not conscious of having frequently offended God and being greatly in debt to His justice? One of the most effectual means of repairing these offences, is by loving our neighbor: "To love one's neighbor as one's self, is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices." (Mark XII. 33.)

The second blessing resulting from true charity is, that if we love our neighbor as Christ commands, we will never, in any way, act inconsistent with God's law. We would consider every man as a member of Christ, and consequently would treat him with the sentiments he deserves in that character. We would never do anything contrary to

the good of his soul, for to do this would in reality be the expression of the most mortal hatred, as under the appearance of friendship, it brings about his eternal damnation. If we loved our neighbor from a motive of religion, we certainly would bear with all his weaknesses and imperfections; for "charity is patient, is kind." (I. Cor. XIII. 4.) Instead of this Christian meekness which the Apostle recommends, what do we generally see in the world? — Selfishness, anger, quick temper ready to take fire at any moment. You cannot bear with your neighbor, nevertheless you require him to bear with you. "Bear ye one another's burdens," St. Paul exhorts us, "and so you shall fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal. VI. 2.)

It is not enough to love our neighbor in principle; our charity must be effectual and practical. Our Lord says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself.*" (Matth. XIX. 19.) Nothing can be more sincere than the love we bear ourselves. It is discernable in every action of our life. Even when we do good to others — is it not generally our own private interest we seek? This inclination to self-interest is so strong that it rules every affection of our mind, and seems to be interwoven with our very nature, insomuch that it is ourselves we love in reality at the very time we mean to testify our love towards others. If, therefore, you purpose to fulfill the law of charity, and love your neighbor as yourself, you must fulfill that other commandment of Christ, "All things, therefore, whatever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them." (Matth. VII. 12.) We are bound not only

to wish our neighbor well, but also to procure him every advantage that lies in our power, and as often as he stands in need of our services; as St. Augustine says, "We love our neighbors truly as ourselves, when we wish them the same advantages we wish unto ourselves, and procure them the same benefits we would willingly procure for ourselves." Two things appear from this: First, that in consequence of the great law of mutual charity we are obliged never to do harm to our neighbor; and secondly, to do him all the good, to render him every service in our power, as often as occasion requires, although he were our mortal enemy.

But among the blessings arising from this exercise of fraternal charity, none is so exalted and effectual, as the love of God in this life and the possession of His kingdom in the life to come. Therefore we are bound to direct our chief endeavors to procure for our neighbor this great, this unspeakable, this inestimable good. In virtue of this obligation we are bound to sacrifice every temporal interest, even our life, for our neighbor's salvation, when it depends thereon, as St. John says, "In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (I John III. 16.) Although the occasion of laying down our life for our brethren seldom occurs, yet we are bound to be inwardly disposed to do so, from a strong and well founded assurance that God will enable us to discharge our duty in this particular when the occasion offers.

Is it not astonishing that persons who pretend to

fear and love God, and to act on principles of conscience, should so frequently be guilty of sins against charity?

"My little children," says St. John, "let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (I John III. 18.) — Let us, then, love our brethren, love them without exception, in Christ, love them as ourselves, sincerely and effectually, thus fulfilling the command of Christ, and meriting eternal reward.

Evening Meditation.

XXXI.

On the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

"Look, and make it according to the pattern." — Exod. XXV. 40.

Holy Church, through the means of her devotions, instructs the minds and moves the hearts of her children. To a faithful and obedient child of the Church it is quite a sufficient reason for the acceptance of any devotion, that the Church recommends it and approves of it. It is in accordance with a Catholic instinct to embrace with ready and cheerful welcome whatever is thus proposed to us. But she is not satisfied with this. She wishes us to understand as well as to be moved.

When the Church, therefore, brings before us the Sacred Heart of Our Blessed Saviour as an object of devotion, she wishes us to think upon what that Heart did for us; she directs our attention to His love for us, to that love which suggested the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist, and on the cross shed its last drop of blood for us.

Turn for a moment your thoughts upon the passion of Our Lord, and you see all through its bitter course the influence and action of the Sacred Heart. Long before the time of sorrow arrived, He had been anticipating the event, and had desired it in His Heart. The prophet said of Him, "He was offered because it was His own will." (Isai. LIII. 7.) And we have His own assurance of the eagerness with which He was looking forward towards the time when He was to prove to the world how much He loved it; for He said, speaking of His passion, "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it become accomplished?" (Luke XII. 50.) And when the time for which He had been looking at last arrived, it was in His Sacred Heart that His suffering was first evinced. His agony in the garden of Gethsemani is its first act. And what does that agony imply? He has not yet fallen into the power of His enemies, and no human hand has touched Him. The scourging, and the crowning with thorns, and the carrying of the cross, and the crucifixion have not yet taken place, but His Precious Blood begins to be shed. He rehearses in that hour of agony all the details of His passion, and His Sacred Heart breaks under the pressure which this anticipation makes to bear upon it. Great as were the physical sufferings to which He was subjected in the last hours of His life, they were nothing in comparison to the grief, the fear, the desolation and the anguish which reigned within Him. All this began in the garden; it continued throughout; it was at its utmost when He called out in a loud voice on the

cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Matth. XXVII. 46.) And why all this? It was because He became man in order to redeem us from the punishment due to sin. It is the heart of man which takes delight in the commission of sin. And therefore Jesus willed that His own Sacred Heart should be the seat of His sufferings. The last act of His passion, too, concerns His Sacred Heart. For just before He was taken down from the cross, His side is opened with the centurion's spear and from His wounded Heart pour forth the last drops of blood and water. Can we, then, pretend to value the passion of our most loving Redeemer, and not value especially the work done throughout its course by the Sacred Heart? Well, therefore, might Our Lord, in His apparition to the Blessed Margaret Mary, point to His wounded Heart, and say, "Behold my Heart, which is so enflamed with love for men."—If then, you value the passion of Our Lord, and if you love the Blessed Sacrament, cherish the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

And what are the lessons which we ought to learn through the means of this loving devotion?

Love is the first lesson. This is the direct and immediate return that Jesus demands of us. The Sacred Heart of Jesus tells us of His love for us, and it is on this account that it appeals for the offering of the love of our own heart. For love always demands a return, and if it gain not that return it is unsatisfied and a source of pain to us rather than of joy and comfort. Your heart is wounded, and it feels the pain of the wound. So

is the Sacred Heart of Our Lord always represented as wounded, not only because the spear pierced it, but because the coldness of man pierced it also. St. John, who was able to learn what was the love of Our Divine Saviour at its very source, argues with us and says, we should love God, "because He hath first loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins." (I John IV. 10.) The Sacred Heart may certainly use this argument, and surely we cannot allow the appeal to be unanswered. Our Blessed Lord has told us what is to be the measure of Our love for God: it must be the love of the whole heart. This was the measure of his love for us, for He gave His whole heart for the work of our redemption.

Generosity and a *spirit of sacrifice* are to be added to our love, for so the Sacred Heart teaches us. The love of that Heart was certainly not an inactive one; it was not a limited and sentimental love. What, again, does the wound it bears imply?— When Blessed Margaret Mary saw Our Lord displaying His Heart before her, it appeared to her as if flames were proceeding from it. And well might flames issue from a furnace of love. The Sacred Heart was always, and always continues to be, a holocaust or whole-burnt offering to the Eternal Father, which He accepts from His well-beloved Son. Well may our generous Lord ask us what more He could have done for us, than He has done through the immensity of His love. Can we dare to ask the same question of Him? We have done so little; we are so ungenerous and timid in His service. We shrink from every

sacrifice, and fear to make an effort which costs us the least pain or self-denial. Devotion to the Sacred Heart is a great cure for tepidity. This is a chief cause why the Church wishes to propagate it, because she has already learned from a happy experience that they who practise it are roused from indolence and are excited to fervor.

Humility and *meekness* are also taught us, as special lessons, by the Sacred Heart. "Learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of Heart." (Matth. XI. 29.) Nor are these to be considered as speculative virtues, or as perfections only in those souls called to an exceptional degree of holiness. The want of these virtues, or the existence of contrary vices, is the cause of our sins in dealing with others. Pride, and a want of forbearance with others are the source of that want of charity which prevails so much in the world, and which even in those who pretend to be devout and conscientious, is not unfrequently found to exist. Do our hearts bear any resemblance whatever to His, Who forgave His enemies, Who suffered and died for them, and Who gave us an example that we should do for others what His Heart moved Him to do for us?

Zeal for souls is another lesson of the Sacred Heart. Why did that Heart suffer so much? Not for itself, but for the souls of men. "Behold this Heart," Our Lord said, "which is so inflamed with love for men." And if we have no sympathy whatever for the spiritual good of others, no desire for the conversion of sinners, if we are unwilling to do anything to bring others to share in the spiritual

blessings of which, through the immense mercy of God, we are partakers—where are our faith and love? If we hate sin because of the injury it offers to God, how can we quietly witness its influence over souls, and do nothing to diminish that influence, and to shield the glory of God? — When the Sacred Heart of our agonizing Saviour suffered in the garden of Gethsemani, it was oppressed by the view of so many souls being lost through sin. Our souls ought to share in the sorrow and in the prayer of our loving Redeemer in behalf of sinful souls.

One more lesson we learn from this fertile source of instruction, and that is the salutary lesson of *fervor in prayer*. How fervent and persevering was that sad hour's prayer in the garden! How cold and how short and easily broken off are our prayers! And why so? Because our heart is so little in our work, and our treasure is elsewhere. In the lives of the saints who have been eminent for prayer, we find how their hearts were affected in that holy exercise. It is recorded of St. Catharine of Siena that Our Lord appeared to her on one occasion when she was in prayer, took away her heart and placed His own within her breast. Well known is the instance of St. Philip Neri who, from the violent action of his heart in prayer, suffered a physical result which was externally visible, and of St. Francis Xavier, who used sometimes to feel his heart so overflowing with the delights with which God visited him, that he used to exclaim, "Enough, O Lord, enough!" The love of St. Francis of Assisi was so great, that he was distinguished by the marks of the wounds of Our Lord; his

heart, like that of his crucified Love, was pierced — more indeed by the force of his compassion, than by the wound imprinted by the seraph.

To some these may seem exaggerated and over-drawn facts; but if we knew more of the lessons of the Sacred Heart, probably they would seem less strange and unlikely. This is certain, that we have to deal with the same loving God as the saints had, and can learn from the same source how to pray and how to love. And although hitherto we may have done but little towards arriving at a closer union with God, let us now, at least, exclaim with St. Augustine, "Too late have I learned to love Thee, O Lord!"

The ejaculation especially addressed to this source of love tells us what is the immediate blessing we ask for through this devotion:

"O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I implore
That I may ever love Thee more and more!"

Points of Meditation for next Morning.

XXXII.

Recapitulation.

"I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?" — Luke XII. 49.

1. *The lessons of the Sacred Heart urge us to imitation.* — Consider attentively, that your repugnance to sacrifices for Our Lord is a sign of your little love for Him. What other reason is there why it costs you so much to subdue a resentment, an affection, a dislike? — Do at least this much: begin to sacrifice yourself, in order to learn to love Him.

2. *Every little sacrifice produces a new degree of love in us.* — Our Lord never retracted in the least part the entire sacrifice He has made of Himself; on the contrary, every time that He renews His sacrifice in Holy Mass, He renews the complete surrender He has made of Himself. Why do you make so little progress in virtue? You began, but discontinued to make sacrifices for Him. Do you recollect those resolutions of a recollected, obedient, patient life? As long as you put them in practice, your love for Jesus increased day by day; and as soon as you grew negligent, your heart grew cold. It is, then, in your own interest, to keep the fire of divine love aglow in your heart by daily little sacrifices.

3. *Compare the virtues of the Sacred Heart with your own tepidity.* — You are one of those cold souls, so reserved with the Heart of this loving God. Have you ever well pondered the examples of virtue which it gave you? — What do you think, now that you know them? — What do you think of yourself? — O Heart of my Saviour, why have I not known Thee before? Because I was so reserved, so timid, so diffident in my prayers to Thee, in meditating on Thee, in following Thee, I am so destitute of virtue.

"O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I implore
That I may ever love Thee more and more!"

Seventh Day.

Meditation during the Forenoon.

XXXIII.

On Prayer.

"The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds." — Eccl. XXV. 31.

Our manifold necessities, both spiritual and temporal, the depravity and infirmities of our nature, the various dangers to which we are constantly exposed, our inability to do the least good of ourselves, the frequent temptations of the devil, the world and the flesh, which we have to combat and overcome — all these are convincing proofs of the indispensable obligation and absolute necessity of prayer. "Watch ye, and pray," says Our Lord, "that ye enter not into temptation." (Matth. XXVI. 41.) St. Paul exhorts us to "pray without ceasing" (I Thess. V. 17.), as we are always in need of help. Not that the Apostle means that we should be incessantly on our knees, or actually thinking of God, as this would be incompatible with our weakness and the requirements of our daily duties; but that we are always to walk in the presence of God, to raise our hearts frequently to Him, and to offer up all our actions to His honor and glory.

Prayer is the ordinary means appointed by God, and required as a condition on our part, for obtaining the helps and graces necessary for salvation. It differs from the other means of salvation in this, that its want cannot be supplied by anything else.

The want of actual baptism may be supplied by martyrdom or desire; the want of the sacrament of Penance may be supplied by perfect contrition; those who are unable to fast or practise the rigorous austerities of self-denial and mortifications may supply the want of them by alms-deeds; and the poor have it in their power to supply their want of alms-deeds by bearing their afflictions and trials with patience and resignation: but the want of prayer can be supplied by nothing else; so that if it be neglected, the graces annexed and promised to it will not be bestowed — for the reason, because they are not asked, as St. James observes, "You have not, because you ask not." (James IV. 2.)

The grace of prayer is never wanting to us. God bestows it upon all men as the first step towards their salvation, moving them to have recourse to Him, and giving them the ability to pray, so that if we neglect prayer, we may justly blame ourselves for all the fatal consequences.

Prayer is founded upon faith and hope, and implies the most perfect acts of religion. The idea of prayer is not to be confined to petition only, as those seem to imagine who appear in the divine presence only with hands lifted up to receive favors. They call upon God to represent to Him their wants, and have a heart but to wish, and a tongue but to ask; they are fervent and eloquent in petitioning, but cool, negligent and deficient in praising and thanking God for benefits received. It is therefore to be remarked, that prayer is an elevation of the mind and heart to God. As this elevation may be made in five different ways, there

are five different kinds of prayer, namely, meditation, oblation, thanksgiving, petition and adoration. These acts, again, may be performed internally or externally, either in private or in public; for which reason prayer is also divided into mental and vocal, public and private prayer.

Mental or internal prayer, otherwise called meditation, is performed in the mind, without being expressed in words. Vocal prayer is performed by uttering our sentiments in words. A daily meditation is strongly recommended as one of the most effectual means to improve in the love of God, and to advance in virtue. It is to the neglect of it that Holy Scripture attributes all disorders of mankind: "With desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart." (Jerem. XII. 11.)

Public or common prayer is that which the faithful, united together in a body, offer up in public worship in church, or which a whole family, or a number of devout Christians, assembled at home or in an oratory, offers up together. Our Blessed Saviour teaches us, in the Lord's Prayer, to pray as if many were assembled together, and He assures us, "that where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them." (Matth. XVIII. 20.)

After these preliminary remarks, consider the qualities and conditions of prayer.

St. Gregory says, "If we are willing that God should hear us in our prayers, we must hear Him in our hearts." To gain all the advantages of prayer, it should be performed in the state of

grace; for St. James tells us that "the prayer of the just man availeth much." (James V. 16.) However, if a person be so unhappy as to be in mortal sin, he is not therefore to neglect prayer; since the more sinful he is, the more he stands in need of it, and the more diligent he should be in praying for the grace of a true conversion, and imploring the mercy of God. Prayer, accompanied with a sincere purpose of amendment, is his only resource; and the example of the humble publican and the prodigal son should be an encouragement to him, as they show how ready the Lord is to hear the prayers of the greatest sinners, when they return to Him in the sincerity of their hearts and invoke His mercy and justice.

Attention is the spirit and soul of prayer, and if it be wanting, prayer is defective in its very substance, it being essentially a raising of the mind and heart to God. Let the lips and the tongue, then, be ever so busily employed, unless our heart and thoughts be fixed on God, it is only praying in outward appearance, and not in reality; it is only praying like the pharisees, of whom Our Lord complained, "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." (Matth. XV. 8.) How can such persons expect to be heard by God, when they themselves pay no attention to what they pray for? Is it not dishonoring God to address His divine Majesty with such disrespect, such indifference, and pretend to manifest to Him the desires of the heart, when the heart is in no way concerned nor has any sincere or earnest desire of obtaining what the words express, but is

wandering on worldly subjects, and is occupied with willful distractions? It is necessary to recollect ourselves, to keep a close guard over our mind and heart when we go to prayer. We should prepare our souls for appearing in the divine presence with due respect, according to the admonition of the Holy Ghost, "Before prayer prepare thy soul, and be not as a man that tempteth God." (Eccli. XVIII. 23.) This preparation consists in calling to mind the presence of God, in keeping a lively sense of it during prayer, and in directing our attention to a good end.

Humility is another condition of good prayer. We must beware of following the example of the proud pharisee, who confided in his own justice, depended on his own merits, and presumptuously imagined that he was worthy that his prayers should be heard. Far from entertaining such presumptuous ideas, we are to renounce all self-confidence, and throw ourselves entirely on the mercy and goodness of God; we are to prostrate ourselves like the publican, with a deep sense of our guilt, at the feet of our offended Lord. We are to lay open to His eyes all the wounds of our soul, that they may be healed. We are to represent all our wants and necessities to Him, and fervently pray for relief with a sincere desire and wish to obtain it. We are to acknowledge ourselves unworthy not only to obtain the mercy we implore, but even to lift up our eyes, or to appear and speak in the presence of God's majesty.

The next condition that must accompany our prayer is a lively and unshaken faith, or firm con-

fidence and trust in God's boundless power, goodness and mercy. This condition is so necessary, that St. Augustine says, "If faith be wanting, prayer is lost." Diffidence and despondency make a person unworthy of God's favors; it binds His hands, and shuts up the course of His grace. Hence St. James asks us to "ask in faith, nothing wavering." (James I. 6.)

Another condition of prayer is, to present our petitions in the name of Jesus Christ, Who assured us that "whatever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do." (John XIV. 13.) He is the Mediator of our redemption; He is our Advocate and our Highpriest; and "there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby they must be saved." (Acts IV. 12.) He has purchased for us the grace which we pray for, and it is through Him that we are to "go with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid." (Hebr. IV. 16.) His infinite merits are the foundation in which we are to ground our hopes. But temporal blessings, which are liable to be abused, should not be prayed for otherwise than conditionally, if the Lord see that they are conducive to His own honor, and expedient for the salvation of our souls. We ought to make His holy will the sole rule and measure of all our desires.

Perseverance is the last condition of a good prayer; for as it is the crown of virtue, so it gives to prayer its efficacy. If God sometimes defers granting our requests, it is, to make us sensible of the value of His gifts, to try our fidelity and sub-

mission, to reward our patience, to make us redouble our fervor and continue striking at the gate of mercy until it is opened. Those who put their trust in Him, and pray with the necessary dispositions, are never confounded, but are sure, sooner or later, to receive the effects of His goodness; so that if our prayers in general often prove fruitless and ineffectual, it is our own fault. It is because they are defective in some respect; it is because they are not duly performed, or want in the proper qualities and conditions; it is because we pray for things that are inexpedient or prejudicial to our salvation; it is because we render ourselves unworthy of receiving what we ask for; it is, in a word, because we do not pray for what we ought, nor in the manner how we ought, according to the words, "You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss." (James IV. 3.)

Resolve, then, to commence here on earth by fervent prayer that intercourse with God, which is to form our perpetual happiness in heaven.

PRAYER.

O Merciful Jesus! Vouchsafe to pour forth into my heart the true spirit of prayer, and grant that I may perform this heavenly exercise in a manner acceptable to Thee. Give me the spirit of fervor and devotion, that my prayers may find acceptance in Thy sight on earth, and may be continued forever in Thy praise in heaven. Amen.

Spiritual Reading.

XXXIV.

On the Good Use of Time.

It is not enough to refrain from evil, but we must also devote our time to the fulfilment of our duties. The Gospel gives us to understand that on the day of judgment we shall be held accountable for every idle word we speak, and consequently for every idle hour misspent. Again, we read in the Gospel, that the slothful and unprofitable servant was cast into extreme darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, simply because he was indolent and slothful, and buried his talent in the ground, instead of improving and turning it to some advantage. This plainly shows how offensive to God an idle, careless and inactive life is, and how necessary it is to improve the time God has given us.

It is our duty to consecrate every moment of time to God by employing it in a manner worthy of His divine acceptance. To excite us to the performance of this duty, Holy Scripture exposes to our view the most pressing motives by teaching us that time is short and uncertain; that the time that is once lost never returns; that it is granted to us by the mercy of God to be so disposed and sanctified as to purchase for us eternal glory; that time is not so much to be computed by the number of years of which it is composed, as by the benefit and good use made of it; that we ought to endeavor to redeem the misspent time by applying ourselves with greater fervor and assiduity to the practice of

good works before the dark and fatal night of death overtakes us; in short, that all the time which is not well employed is idle time, time thrown away; and as the loss is irreparable, it can never be sufficiently regretted.

It is not the number of years we have lived, but the number of good works we have done, that will be regarded on the day of judgment. This is the rule by which our days are reckoned; this is the way to arrive at an honorable and respectable old age in a short time; for as the Holy Ghost teaches us, venerable old age is not to be computed by the number of years that a man lives on earth but by the number of good works he performs in a lifetime. "A spotless life is old age." (Wisd. IV. 9.) The just man, who in a short time attains to a state of perfection, is said to fill up much age in a short space of time. "Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time." (Ib. 13.)

If we proceed according to this rule, what a considerable part of our natural life shall we find deducted as having produced no fruits conducive to life everlasting? Oh, what an afflicting reflection will it be for us at the hour of death when, standing on the verge of eternity, we look back and consider the ill use we have made of our time! Few are now truly sensible of the greatness of their loss, but then they shall be convinced how valuable time is, and what treasures are lost by idleness. This made St. Bernard say, though nothing seems to be less valued or esteemed by the generality of mankind than time, yet nothing is more precious or more estimable, since there is not a day or an hour of

our life but we might purchase an infinite treasure and entitle ourselves to an increase of God's grace here, and to an immortal crown of glory hereafter.

How precious will a life well employed and sanctified be in the sight of God, and what a consolation will it be to us at our dying moments! Let us, then, be wise in future: let us employ well our precious time in doing good works, in avoiding sin, and working out our salvation. Let us watch, and seize every moment as it flies, and carefully improve it, ever remembering that the night is coming on, in which no man can work.

It is a great rule for virtue and a good life, to consider every day as the last. Many have admired this rule; many have adopted it in theory; but few have long adhered to it in practice. The example of the saints, however, shows that it is practicable. Make it, then, your rule. Consider every day as your last: it will come in the end. Thus you will be enabled to look on your past life with satisfaction, and at the appointed hour you will easily and confidently make your transition to that eternity, to which time is but the preparation and introduction. "Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good." (Gal. VI. 10.)

Afternoon Conference.

XXXV.

On Self-Denial.

"I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection." — I. Cor. IX. 27.

Self-denial is a duty. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." (Matth. XVI. 24.) "And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." (Luke XIV. 27.) Self-denial, moreover, is a *daily* duty. "And He said to all: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross *daily*, and follow me." (Luke IX. 23.)

The early Christians went through self-denials in their very profession of the Gospel: what are *our* self-denials? In what sense do *we* fulfill the words of Christ? Have we any distinct notions of what is meant by the words "taking up our cross?"

In answering these questions observe, first of all, that according to Holy Scripture, our self-denial must be daily. "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross *daily*," is the manner in which St. Luke records the words. Accordingly, self-denial consists not in a few occasional efforts, a few accidental good deeds, or certain seasons of repentance and prayer — a mistake, which minds of a certain class are very apt to fall into. Again, the word *daily* implies, that the self-denial which is pleasing to Christ, consists in little things. — This is plain: for opportunities of great self-denial do not come every day. To take up the cross of Christ is no great action done once for all; it consists in the

continual practice of small duties which are distasteful to us.

Our self-denial must show itself, above all, in the mortification of our evil inclinations. Every one who is at all in the habit of examining himself, must be conscious of such within him. Many have more than one, all of us have some one or other, and in resisting and overcoming such, self-denial has its first employment. One man is indolent and fond of amusement; another is passionate or ill-tempered; another is vain; another has little control over his tongue; others are weak and cannot resist the ridicule of thoughtless companions; others are tormented with evil thoughts. — Now, let every one consider what his weak point is: in that is his self-denial. His self-denial is not in those things that are easy to him, but in that one thing, in those several things, whatever they are, in which he does his duty against his nature. Never think yourself safe because you do your duty in ninety-nine points; it is the hundredth which must evidence, or rather instance and realize your following of Christ. It is in reference to this you must watch and pray — pray continually for God's grace to help you, and watch with fear and trembling lest you fall. Others may not know what these weak points of your character are; they may mistake them. But you should know them — and oh, that you may have strength to wrestle with them and overcome them! Oh, that you may have wisdom to care little for the praise you get from the world! Oh, that you may, as it were, sweep the house diligently to discover what you lack of

the full measure of obedience to the demands of duty! For be quite sure that this apparently small defect will influence your whole spirit and judgment in all things. Be quite sure that your judgment of persons, and of events, and of actions, and your spirit towards God and man, and your knowledge of your duty — all depend in a strange way on this strict endeavor to deny yourself in little things.

But besides these, there are other modes of self-denial. It may so happen, that the sin you are most liable to is not called forth every day. For instance: anger and passion are irresistible when they come upon you, but it is only at times you are provoked, and then you are off your guard, so that the occasion is over, and you have failed, before you were well aware of its coming. It is right then, for you to find out daily self-denials; and this because Our Lord bids you to take up your cross daily, and because it proves your earnestness, and because by so doing you strengthen your general power of self-mastery, and come to have such an habitual command of yourself as will be a defence ready prepared when the storm of temptation comes. Rise up, then, every morning with the purpose that, please God, the day shall not pass without its self-denial, without a self-denial in innocent pleasures and tastes, if none occurs to mortify sin. Let your very rising from your bed be a self-denial; let your meals be self-denials. Determine to yield to others in things indifferent, to go out of your way in small matters, to inconvenience yourself, if no direct duty suffers by it, rather than you should

not meet your daily discipline. This was the Psalmist's method who, as it were, felt upon himself day and night the hand of the Lord. (Ps. XXXI. 4.) It was St. Paul's method, who "chastised his body, and brought it into subjection." (I Cor. IX. 27.) This is one great end of fasting.

To know whether you are in earnest concerning your salvation, make some sacrifice, do some distasteful thing which you are not actually obliged to do (so that it be lawful), in order to bring home to your mind that in fact you do love your Saviour, that you do hate sin, that you do hate your sinful nature, that you have put aside the world. Thus you will have an evidence, to a certain point, that in forming your resolutions you are not merely using words. It is easy to say fine things, to express sentiments which rise above human nature, but quite another thing to reduce them to practice. "But thou, O man of God, fly these things, and pursue justice, godliness, faith, charity, patience, mildness." (I Tim. VI. 11.) Let not your words run on; force every one of them into action. Try yourself daily in little deeds; this is the way to keep your heart awake, and to prepare yourself for great things.

True, this is difficult; difficult even to those who see the necessity of self-denial. There are such imperfections, such inconsistencies in our heart and life, that continual repentance must ever go hand in hand with our efforts. Much we need the grace of Christ's Most Precious Blood to wash from us the guilt we daily incur. Much we need the aid of His Holy Spirit. And surely He will grant

us the riches of His mercy if we try to be His faithful servants; but as surely He will vouchsafe to none of us the blessedness of being one with Him, if we are not in earnest in following Him.

Evening Meditation.

XXXVI.

On Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

"Hail, full of grace!" —
Luke I. 28.

Theologians and masters of the spiritual life do not hesitate to reckon among the signs of predestination a filial confidence in and devotion to the Blessed Virgin and Mother of God, Mary. In this they are fully supported by the Church, who teaches us to pray, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death."

We pray thus, and do so with confidence, because, although Mary is not the author of grace, God will never refuse the prayer of His Mother. Christ Himself recommended devotion to Mary from the pulpit of the cross by saying to her, "Behold thy son!" referring to the apostle St. John; and to St. John, "Behold thy Mother!" For, as He was pleased, in His great mercy, to raise us to the dignity of being the adopted children of His Heavenly Father, His own brethren and co-heirs of His kingdom: so, by addressing the Blessed Virgin in these words, "Behold thy son," He constituted, in the person of St. John, all the faithful, who were represented by him, the spiritual children

of this His Mother, and placed them under her patronage and protection, that she might look upon them with the tenderness and affection of her immaculate heart. And again, by saying to St. John, and in his person to us, "Behold thy Mother," He gave him and us to understand that He appointed the Blessed Virgin the spiritual Mother of all the faithful. As such, we are to honor and venerate her for His sake with all filial piety, respect and devotion.

Hence we delight to greet her in the words of Gabriel, the heavenly messenger, "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee!" We join with St. Elizabeth, the holy mother of St. John the Baptist, and say, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." With the angel and with St. Elizabeth we glorify God Himself in the person of Mary. We honor and invoke Mary, because such is the will of God, Who rendered her worthy of all honor and elevated her to her super-eminent dignity. We honor and invoke Mary because we wish to walk in the footsteps of the saints, and because the saints never ceased and never will cease to honor and glorify the holy Mother of God. We honor and invoke Mary because her intercession is most powerful with God. And to this latter point let us now devote our attention.

Have you never, when meditating on the exalted dignity of Mary — have you never, when reciting the Angelic Salutation, found the still, small voice of conscience pressing upon you the feeling, "Have confidence in Mary?" She who was blessed beyond

all women, she who gave to the world its Saviour, would bring salvation also to you. St. Anselm does not hesitate to assert, that she is the only dispenser of the grace of Jesus Christ; others call her the indispensible mediatrix of our salvation.

Hence arises in the minds of all Christians, in whom the seed of true piety has not been choked by infidelity or early prejudice that lively confidence in the protection of the Blessed Virgin, which prompts every one of them to invoke her in his dangers and necessities. It is to Mary that sinners have recourse to obtain their reconciliation with God; the just to secure to themselves the grace of perseverance; the weak to be strengthened in their perils and temptations; the afflicted to find comfort in their relief and their pains. After the saving name of Jesus, the holy name of Mary is the dearest to the hearts of the faithful, as being their safeguard against all the attacks of their visible and invisible enemies, their support during life and at the hour of death, their consolation in time and the foundation of their hope for eternity.

What a subject for exultation that such an inestimable treasure was given to us! With what care should we not foster devotion to Mary in our hearts, improve it by mutual edification and transmit it by example and instruction to others! With what readiness should we not avail ourselves of such a powerful help for the working out and securing our eternal salvation!

Not that devotion to Mary, without our personal efforts, will sanctify and save our souls; but it will powerfully assist us in doing the other things re-

quired of us to be saved; not that this pure Virgin will ever favor such who under pretense of some exterior practices of piety towards her, purpose to continue in their sins and evil course with impunity. The only condition upon which Mary will grant us the support of her powerful intercession is the desire to love what she loved, to do what she did, and thus prove ourselves her worthy children. If you desire that your prayers should be agreeable to her, and that she should love and protect you, resolve at once to imitate her example. Imitate her purity, her humility, her resignation to the will of God, her love of God and her charity. If we beg her prayers in humble confidence, and with a sincere desire and intention of amending our lives and improving in virtue, of serving God with greater fidelity, we may rest assured of her maternal protection.

Let us, then, redouble our confidence, affection and devotion to this charitable advocate and tender Mother, and we will experience more and more how sweet, how consoling, how efficacious to obtain all graces is her powerful intercession and assistance. St. Bernard says in this regard, "Let only him be silent of thy mercy, O Blessed Virgin, who having called on thee in his necessities, was ever refused thy aid." The holy doctors SS. Augustine, Chrysostom, Ambrose and Jerome were faithful in honoring the Blessed Virgin, and attained, through her intercession, not only great holiness of life, but most astonishing learning. The Church salutes her as the "Star of the sea", leading by its light all that are tossed on the stormy waves of this life,

that they may not be shipwrecked, but rise again, even if they have fallen, by true penance, and arrive safely in the port of salvation. St. Bernard addresses us with the following beautiful words: "Turn not away your eyes from the beauty of this star, if you do not desire to perish in the waves. When the storms of temptation arise, when you run against the shoals of tribulation, look up to the star, call upon Mary! Are you troubled about the multitude of your sins, confused with shame on account of your impure conscience, on the point of being oppressed with sadness or of sinking in the dark abyss of despair: think of Mary! In dangers, in doubts, in anxieties, think of Mary! Let her name be ever on your lips, ever in your heart; and that you may be worthy of her intercession, fail not to follow her example. Following her, you cannot stray; under her protection you need not fear; in her company you will not grow weary; if she is propitious to you, you will attain salvation, and experience by yourself that the name of the Virgin is Mary, 'Star of the sea.'"

PRAYER.

Hail, Mary, full of grace! May I experience the salutary effects of thy intercession, so powerful to obtain mercy and grace. Pray for me now, during life; and at the hour of my death stand by me, as thou didst stand by thy beloved Son when He expired on the cross. Intercede for me with my Judge, thy Son, that He receive me into heaven, there to praise Him and thee forever. Amen.

Points of Meditation for next Morning.

XXXVII.

Recapitulation.

"Hail, Mary, full of grace!" —
Luke I. 48.

1. *"Behold thy Mother!"* — "When Jesus therefore had seen His mother and the disciple standing, whom He loved, He said to His mother, Woman, behold thy son. After that he saith to the disciple, Behold thy Mother." (John XIX. 26, 27.) Thus Mary was, not by an angel's message, but by the lips of the dying Son of God, proclaimed Mother of all mankind.

2. *"From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."* (Luke I. 48.) From one end of the universe to the other millions of voices ascend every moment to carry to Mary their supplications and praises. — A strong, fervent devotion to Mary will guard us against temptation and sin. — Devotion to the Mother makes us more zealous for the glory of the Son. — What a rich harvest of graces would be ours if we were to renew constantly in our hearts the remembrance of Mary, our Mother!

3. *Have confidence in Mary!* — What precious favors may we not hope from her if, whilst perseveringly invoking her intercession, we do our utmost to imitate the purity and holiness of her life! "He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord." (Prov. VIII. 35.) When you stand before the judgment-seat of God, you will realize how salutary it was to have often repeated, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death."

Eighth Day.

Meditation during the Forenoon.

XXXVIII.

Growth in Holiness.

"By their fruits you shall know them." — Matth. VII. 20.

As the tree is known by its fruits, so is real virtue known by the effects it produces in the life of man. The sanctification of our souls was the true end for which we came into this world. "This is the will of God, your sanctification." (I Thess. IV. 3.) — Has the will of God in this particular been the governing principle throughout our life? Far from it, this great and important duty has hitherto seldom found a place among our thoughts. "Who is he, and we will praise him" (Eccl. XXXI. 9.), that reflects seriously on his obligation of steadily pursuing the attainment of holiness? With the majority of mankind this thought is, alas, the last to which they give consideration, and hence it is, as consequence follows cause or shadow substance, that the precious time of life is wasted, instead of being employed for attaining the great end for which we were created.

But how is it possible to lead a pure and holy life amid the distractions and dangers that surround us? — True, it is attended with difficulties, but the difficulties are not so great as we imagine. The duties which religion prescribes in order to attain a state of sanctify or godliness consist only in faithfully observing God's commandments, as appears from the words of Christ, "If thou wilt

enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matth. XIX. 17.) Is this a task so mightily arduous as to be deemed almost impossible? Many thousands of our predecessors by this very means have earned for themselves the glory and happiness they now enjoy in heaven. Their example should instruct, their reward encourage us.

It is a melancholy truth that, in our age, iniquity overruns the face of the earth, and by a strange depravity vice is reduced to a system and introduced as a fashion. Yet a few there are, and those few consist of thousands, and those thousands are scattered amongst all nations, who constantly fulfill the holy law of God. The instances are before our eyes. Our churches bear testimony to their piety, old age and poverty to their charity, all their transactions give proof of the regularity of their conduct. And what can hinder us from doing what thousands have done, and what many are doing daily before our eyes?

It has been impiously said that some of the commandments are impossible to be observed, even by the just themselves, even if they should use their utmost endeavors. But this doctrine, so repugnant to faith, has been censured and condemned by the Church as inconsistent with the principles of religion, as contrary to the very conception we have of the divinity. Our Lord Himself tells us, "My yoke is sweet, and my burden light." (Matth. XI. 30.) How could this be true, if the observance of His commandments were impossible?

Yet, they appear extremely difficult. To whom? To those who make the gratification of their passions

their sole object; to those who will not submit, and are always acting in opposition to their duty. Let them once submit, and they will know by experience that His yoke is sweet and His burden light, and by it they "shall find rest for their souls." (Matth. XI. 29.)

True, man's weakness is great, excessively great; and experience supports the assertion, that it is scarcely in our power to know our own frailty. The intellect of man is clouded with darkness, and his will is reduced to a low degree of feebleness. From these causes result reluctance to good and propensity to evil. When we consider human nature in this light, debased and weakened by original sin, we certainly have reason to be extremely diffident of ourselves, and to exclaim with St. Paul, "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. VII. 24.) Besides, it is a point of faith, that of ourselves we can do nothing with regard to salvation. Our Saviour says, "Without me you can do nothing." (John XV. 5.) And St. Paul reminds us that "we are not sufficient to think any thing of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficieny is from God." (II Cor. III. 5.) This is indeed enough to sink us to the lowest degree of self-annihilation in the eyes of God. It should not, however, make us overlook the powerful resources we have.

For it is no less an article of faith and an undoubted principle of religion, that, with the grace of God, we can overcome the greatest difficulties. "I can do all things", says St. Paul, "in Him Who strengtheneth me." (Philip IV. 13.) But he adds,

"Yet not I, but the grace of God with me." (I Cor. XV. 10.) And then he triumphantly exclaims, "If God be for us, who is against us?" (Rom. VIII. 31.)

This divine grace or heavenly assistance is, in some measure, imparted to all; for St. Paul declares that God "will have all men to be saved." (I Tim. II. 4.) Now the will of God must necessarily be effected so far as to supply all with the necessary means of salvation, namely with grace; for grace implies every necessary means for that end. This divine grace, the holy Fathers say, is always proportioned to the difficulties attendant upon the different stations of life we are called to and engaged in. Again, this divine grace or heavenly assistance is always increased in proportion to our fidelity and fervor; as it is decreased or withdrawn in proportion to our negligence or infidelity.

Seeing, therefore, that with the grace of God we can fulfill our most difficult obligations; that this grace is imparted abundantly to us; that it is in our power, by a proper application to prayer and godliness, to increase this divine grace and thereby augment our spiritual strength and ability—what excuse can we plead for not growing in holiness? This reflection made St. Paul exclaim, "O man of God . . . pursue justice, godliness, faith, charity, patience, mildness. Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold of eternal life whereunto thou art called." (I Tim. VI. 11, 12.)

But how is it, that many feel so little, and experience so seldom, the influence of divine grace? This happens either because they resist its in-

fluence, or because Almighty God, in punishment of their neglect, withdraws His powerful grace, and leaves them only such weak and feeble aids as make little impression on the mind or heart. In this situation, wherein man appears abandoned to his own weakness, everything seems difficult, every temptation is easily yielded to. Can anything be more dreadful than a situation of this kind ? There can not, undoubtely, as it borders on reprobation and eternal perdition. "Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee, be not darkness." (Luke XI. 35.) If the grace of God does not enlighten you, you can have no thought of God, no desire of salvation, no relish for the things of heaven.

The grace of God, then, being the light of the soul as well as its strength, it follows that we should dread no loss in this life equal to the loss of His grace, and should resolve on cherishing and improving it by a virtuous and holy life. To do this, we must employ the means to increase the influence of grace by frequent fervent prayer, works of charity, the sacraments and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Using these divine remedies, we shall certainly receive such abundance of divine grace as will make the greatest difficulties appear easy. Covered with this armor of faith, we shall soon learn to resist the most violent temptations, elude all the wiles of the evil spirit, and triumph over all spirits of hell. Then we shall walk with cheerfulness in the most arduous path of righteousness, observing "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever

holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame" (Philip. IV. 8.), till the end comes of our mortal course, when God in His mercy shall call us to make us partakers of the high reward He has promised to all those — and to those alone — who lead holy and virtuous lives upon earth.

Spiritual Reading.

XXXIX.

Curiosity a Temptation to Sin.

One chief cause of the wickedness which is everywhere seen in the world, and which, alas, each of us has more or less for his share, is our curiosity to have some fellowship with darkness, some experience of sin, to know what the pleasures of sin are like. Nor is it wonderful that this should be the case in the descendants of that guilty pair to whom satan in the beginning held out admittance into a strange world of knowledge and enjoyment as the reward of disobedience to God's commandment. "And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold; and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband, who did eat." (Gen. III. 6.) Curiosity strangely moves us to disobedience. We intrude into things forbidden, in various ways: in reading what we should not read, in hearing what we should not hear, in seeing what we should not see, in going whither we should not go, in presumptuous reasonings and arguings when we should have faith,

in acting as if we were our own masters where we should obey. We indulge our reason; we indulge our passions; we indulge our ambition, our vanity; we seek the companionship of the worldly; and all the while we think that, after having acquired this miserable knowledge of good and evil, we can return to our duty, and continue where we left off.

Now this delusion arises from satan's craft, who knows well that if he can get us once to sin, he can easily make us sin twice and thrice, till at length we are taken captive. He sees that curiosity is man's great and first snare, as it was in paradise; and he knows that if he can but force a way into our heart by this chief and exciting temptation, those temptations of other kinds, which follow in life, will easily prevail over us; and, on the other hand, if we resist the beginnings of sin, there is every prospect through God's grace that we shall continue in a religious way. Hence is seen the divine wisdom, as well as the merciful consideration, of the advice of Holy Scripture, "Be not delighted in the paths of the wicked, neither let the way of evil men please thee. Flee from it, pass not by it: go aside, and forsake it." (Prov. IV. 14, 15.) As soon as we are made aware of the temptation, we must, if we are wise, turn our backs upon it, without waiting to think and reason about it; we must engage our mind in other thoughts. There are temptations when this advice is especially necessary; but under all it is highly seasonable.

For, consider, what must in all cases be the con-

sequences of allowing evil thoughts to be present to us, although we do not actually consent to them. This, namely, we shall make ourselves familiar with them, and if we are familiar with sin in thought, we are not far from actually committing it. Hence the precept of Our Lord, "Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation." (Matth. XXVI. 41.) To "flee from the path of the wicked, to pass not by it, to go aside and forsake it", what is this but watching? Therefore Our Lord insists so much on it, knowing that therein lies our safety.

But how few can be truly said to watch and pray? We go through the occupations of the day, quite forgetting, to any practical purpose, that even when prayer is our occupation, there is need of caution. Are we not, generally speaking, living in habitual forgetfulness that this world is a place of trial, that all its employments, its pleasures, its occurrences, even the most innocent, the most acceptable to God, and the most truly profitable in themselves, are all the while so handled by satan as may be the most conducive to our ruin, if he can possibly contrive it? — There is nothing overdrawn or superstitious in this view, as the plain words of Holy Scripture abundantly prove. We are told that "our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Pet. V. 8.); and therefore warned to "be sober and watch". And assuredly our true comfort lies not in disguising the truth from ourselves, but in knowing something more than this: — that though satan is against us, God is for us; that

greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world (I John IV. 4.), and that He will make a way to escape every temptation; for "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able." (I Cor. X. 13.)

God does His part surely, and satan does his part: we alone are unconcerned. Heaven and hell are at war for us and against us; yet we trifle, and let life go on at random. Heaven and hell are before us as our own future abode, one or the other of them; yet our own interest moves us no more than God's mercy. We treat sin not as an enemy to be feared, shunned and abhorred, but as a misfortune and a weakness.

Let us not deceive ourselves. Let us make up our mind to take God for our portion, and let us pray to Him for grace to enable us to do so. Let us avoid the great evil of leisure, of having time on our hands. Though we may be laughed at for our strictness, though we may thereby be ignorant of much which others know; though we may be called cowards, narrow-minded, or superstitious: let us fear not, falter not, fail not, but stand firm and be strong. Let us not be seduced by the tempter and his promises. He can show us no good; he has no good to give us. Rather let us listen to the gracious words of our Maker and Redeemer, "Cry to me, and I will hear thee; and I will show thee great things, and sure things which thou knowest not." (Jerem. III. 3.)

Afternoon Conference.

XL.

The Power of the Will.

"Finally, brethren, be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of His power." — Ephes. VI. 10.

Let us ask ourselves why it is, that we so often wish to do right, and cannot? Why is it, that we are so frail, feeble, languid, wayward, dim-sighted, fluctuating, perverse? Why is it, that day after day we remain irresolute, that we serve God so poorly, that we govern ourselves so weakly and so variably, that we cannot command our thoughts, that we are so slothful, so cowardly, so discontented, so sensual, so ignorant? Is it that the power of God is not within us? Is it literally that we are *not able* to obey God's commandments? — God forbid! We *are* able. We have had the gift of grace implanted within us; we have a power within us to do what we are commanded to do. What is it we lack? — Not the power, but the *will*. What we lack is the real, simple, earnest, sincere inclination and aim to use what God has given us, and what we have in us.

To take an instance of the simplest kind. Is not the power to use our limbs our own by nature? What, then, is sloth but a want of will? But if we are set on attaining an object, is the effort any effort at all? There are cases, doubtless, in which a man *is* weak in power, though earnest in will; and of course it continually happens that he has ungovernable feelings and passions in spite of his better nature. But in a very great multitude of

cases this pretense of want of power is really but a want of will. When a man complains that he is under the dominion of any bad habit, let him seriously ask himself whether he has ever *willed* to get rid of it? Can he say with a simple mind, say in God's sight, "I wish it removed?"

A man, for instance, cannot attend to his prayers; his mind wanders; other thoughts intrude; time after time passes, and it is the same. Shall we say this arises from want of power? Of course it may be so; but before he says so, let him consider whether he has ever roused himself, awakened himself, set his will on attention. We know the feeling in unpleasant dreams, when we say to ourselves, "This is a dream," and yet cannot exert ourselves to will to be free from it; and how, at length by an effort of the will, we move and the spell at once is broken, we wake. So it is with sloth and indolence. The Evil One is heavy on us, but he has no power over us except in our unwillingness to get rid of him.

Let us take what trial we please — the world's ridicule or censure, loss of admirers or friends, loss of ease, endurance of bodily pain — and recollect how easy our course has been after we had once made up our mind to submit to it; how simple all that remained became, how difficulties vanished, and how the soul was strengthened to do what was to be done. Or have we ever found God to fail us when our own heart has not failed us? But it is seldom we have the heart to throw ourselves on the divine Arm; we dare not trust ourselves on the waters, though Christ bids us. We have not St. Peter's faith to come to Him upon the sea.

To inspire us with trust and hope, Our Lord says: "What man is there among you, who, if his son ask bread, will reach him a stone? Or, if he ask a fish, will reach him a serpent? If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?" (Matth. VIII. 9—11.) Let us, then, ask God for His assistance, and we shall be able to say with the Apostle, "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (Philip IV. 13.), adding humbly with him, "Yet not I, but the grace of God with me." (I Cor. XV. 10.) If, then, we lack the power of the will, it is our own fault, because we ask not "in faith, nothing wavering," (James I. 6), but our will is "like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind." (Ibid.) Such being God's promise, what can His mercy do for us which he has not done? "What is there that I ought to do more for my vineyard, that I have not done it?" (Isai. V. 4.)

Oh, how the saints put us to shame, "who by faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, recovered strength from weakness, became valiant in battle, put to flight the armies." (Hebr. XI. 33, 34.) — And why? Because they had a heart to contemplate, to design, to *will* great things. Doubtless, in many respects we are all but men to the end; we hunger, we thirst, we need sustenance, we need sleep, we need society, we need instruction, we need encouragement, we need example; yet

who can say to what heights in time men can attain, who beginning little by little, yet in the distance shadow forth great things? But we sit coldly and sluggishly at home; we fold our hands, and cry, "A little more slumber!" We shut our eyes, we cannot see things afar off, we cannot see "the land before" us. (Deuter. XXXII. 52.) We do not understand that Christ calls us after Him; we do not hear the voice of His heralds in the wilderness; we have not the heart to go forth with Him into the desert Who multiplies the loaves and feeds us by every word of His mouth. Others before us have done in His strength what we have put aside. Others all around us are doing what we will not. Others are fighting against their enemy more truly and bravely. The unlettered, the ungifted, the young, the weak and simple, with sling and stones from the brook are encountering Goliath, as having on divine armor. We fear to be too holy. We fear to cast in our lot with the saints; we fear to seek the strait gate, lest we be of the few, not of the many. Oh, that we become loyal and willing before our race is run! Before our sun goes down in the grave may we learn somewhat more of what the Apostle calls the love of Christ which passeth understanding, and receive some of the rays of love which proceed from Him!

Especially now, when Christ has called us up, let us gird up our loins and fearlessly obey and follow Him. "Put you on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil; for our wrestling is not against flesh and

blood; but against principalities and powers, against the ruler of this world of darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places. Therefore take unto you the armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect." (Ephes. VI. 11—13.)

Final Meditation.

XLI.

On Perseverance.

"Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life."
—Apoc. II. 10

By perseverance is meant the continuation in grace after it has been once received; by *final* perseverance our being in the state of grace at the time of our death.

The Church is careful to remind us that perseverance is a grace which we cannot merit for ourselves. We must depend on God alone to grant it to us, and we must have the fullest confidence that, as He refuses not His grace to those who are faithful and constant in praying for it, He will not refuse this greatest of His favors. And therefore we may share St. Paul's confidence, that He Who began the good work of our salvation by calling us to the faith and making us partakers of His sacraments, in answer to our unceasing prayers will perfect that work unto the end.

With regard to the attainment of perseverance, the most important of all graces, there are certain practical truths which we must bear in mind, and

the recollection of these truths will certainly be a help towards securing it.

First of all, we must not forget that it is *difficult* to persevere. Heaven suffers violence; but heaven is the reward of perseverance, and therefore perseverance demands violence. We must be constantly making efforts, and this is difficult to do. We must be continually on our guard, and this constant watchfulness is contrary to our natural proneness to self-indulgence, and therefore costs us a great deal. Our weakness, also, is so great, and our enemies are so powerful, that there is always a danger of their conquering, and our being subdued. And the length of time that is possibly before us adds to the difficulty. If we knew that we had but one day to labor in, and that all depended on that one day's labor, we might brace ourselves up, and nobly brave all the difficulties of that one short period. But it may be that we shall have years before us; and how can we go on for such a length of time, persevering steadily and faithfully in all that is required of us!

True, it seems discouraging to dwell on such a thought: yet it is a necessary thought, a first principle. But we are not to dwell upon it as if it were the only principle which concerns our perseverance. It is difficult, but remember also that it is not *impossible* to persevere. God commands us to persevere. And He never commands what is impossible. Therefore we can persevere and the knowledge of this possibility at once diminishes the difficulty. St. Augustine was wont to encourage himself with the reflection, "Others have done

it: you can do the same." Others have persevered because they knew they had something difficult to do, and it was this very knowledge that made them persevere. The difficulty made them cautious, and caution saved them. To be forewarned is, for the prudent man, to be forearmed; and the knowledge of a danger is the first step against it.

Therefore, admitting that there is danger and difficulty attending our perseverance, let us not be dismayed; for although difficult, it is quite possible, and, considering all circumstances, we may even maintain that it is *easy*. This seeming contradiction may startle you, but there is no contradiction. Both statements are true: perseverance is difficult, it is easy. It is difficult in one sense, and easy in another. It is difficult when we consider our own weakness and instability, and the power and obstinacy of our enemies. But, then, we are not alone. Why should we be faint-hearted, when we remember that we have God for and with us? "If God be with us, who is against us?" (Rom. VIII. 31.) If God be with us, perseverance is easy.

Nay, more: Perseverance is not only possible and easy, but, if we will, it is even *certain*. St. Paul, or rather the Holy Ghost through him, assures us, "that He, Who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it." (Philip. I. 6.) And at the same time that the Apostle expressed the apprehension of his possible falling away, he did not hesitate to believe in his ultimate success: "I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me." (Philip. IV. 13.) And he elsewhere says, "As to the rest, there is

laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord the just Judge will render to me in that day." (II. Tim. IV. 8.) When we feel confident and certain that we can do a work, we do not fail in the attempt. It is they who hesitate that are frustrated in their efforts. We must go forward with perfect confidence that we shall not be disappointed. God and his holy angels will be with us on our way, and we shall be sure to arrive safely at our journey's end.

"When a certain person in anxiety of mind was often wavering between hope and fear, and, on a time, being overwhelmed with grief, had prostrated himself in prayer in the church before a certain altar, he resolved these things within himself, saying, 'If I did but know that I should still persevere.' And presently he heard within himself this answer from God, 'And if thou didst know this, what wouldst thou then do? Do now, what thou wouldst do then, and thou shalt be secure.' And immediately, being comforted and strengthened, he committed himself to the divine will, and his anxious wavering ceased. Neither had he a mind any more to search curiously to know what should befall him hereafter; but rather studied to inquire the will of God 'well pleasing and perfect,' (Rom. XII. 2.), for the beginning and accomplishment of every good work." (*Imit. of Christ*, I. 25.) This is exactly what we ought to do. We must go forward with the fullest confidence that God, Who created us that we might be saved, and Who grants salvation only to those that persevere, will Himself enable us to attain the reward which He has prepared for us.

To persevere, we must use the means pointed out to us by the masters of the spiritual life for the attainment of this purpose. Briefly summed up, they are:

1) *Avoid the occasion of sin.*—In spite of our strongest resolutions, the occasion will make us fall. In vain, therefore, do we flatter ourselves with the hope of remaining in God's grace, if we do not avoid the occasion of sin.

2) *Sincere confession and frequent devout Communion* are the most efficacious means of confirming us in our good resolutions. The sacraments were instituted for our sanctification and for the maintenance of our spiritual life. Our Divine Saviour, aware of the repugnance of human nature to virtue, and of the necessity of a means of grace, left us the wonderful and consoling sacraments of Penance and the Most Holy Eucharist. "Nothing," says St. Chrysostom, "renders Christians more formidable to the powers of hell, than frequent worthy Communion." And the Council of Trent declares it a sovereign preservative against mortal sin, a powerful antidote against venial sin, and a sure remedy against daily imperfections.

3) *Prayer* is another most efficacious means of perseverance. If we pray perseveringly and with the requisite dispositions, we are sure, sooner or later to receive the gifts of God. "Ask, and you shall receive." (John XVI. 24.) If this promise relates to all things, much more so does it relate to perseverance.

4) *Have a filial confidence in Mary.*—If we are unworthy to receive an answer to our prayer, and

have recourse to her, she will join her petitions with ours, and her prayers are always heard; for the Son will never refuse the petitions of His Mother, especially when they relate to the attainment of our salvation.

5) *Avoid presumption; avoid despondency.* — We have the testimony of St. Alphonsus Liguori for it, that these two faults cause the ruin of many souls. Hence we must avoid presumption, because we know our weakness; we must avoid despondency, because we know the power of God's help. "The God of all grace, Who hath called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, will Himself perfect you, and confirm you, and establish you. To Him be glory and empire for ever and ever. Amen." (I. Pet. V. 10.)

Appendix.

I.

Method of Assisting at Holy Mass.

By St. Leonard of Port Maurice.

St. Thomas Aquinas enumerates four debts, which we owe to God. The first is the debt of adoration and praise; the second, of atonement; the third, of thanksgiving; the fourth, of impetration. In a word, it is an obligation we have towards God to adore and praise Him, to atone for our sins, to thank Him, and to ask Him for His grace. This obligation is fully discharged through Holy Mass. It is a sacrifice of adoration, atonement, thanksgiving and impetration.

To discharge this fourfold indebtedness divide the Mass into four parts:

1. As soon as Mass commences, while the priest, at the foot of the altar, humbles himself, saying the *Confiteor*, etc., do you then, after a brief self-examination, stir up your heart to true contrition, asking pardon of God for your sins, and invoking the aid of the Holy Ghost, and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary that you may hear this Mass with all reverence and devotion. Then, during the first part, which is from the Introit to the Gospel, you will acquit yourself of the obligation of honoring and praising the majesty of that God Who is worthy of infinite honor and praise. Wherefore, humble yourself with Jesus, acknowledging your own unworthiness, and thus humbled internally and externally, and remaining,

as you ought throughout Mass, all modest and composed, say:

"O my God, I adore Thee, and acknowledge Thee for my Lord, for the master of my soul. I protest that all I am, and all I have, are willingly acknowledged by me to be from Thee. And since Thy Supreme Majesty deserves infinite honor and homage, while I am but a poor, helpless being, utterly incapable of paying so great a debt, I offer up to Thee the humiliation and homage which Jesus renders to Thee on the altar. That which Jesus does I purpose also to do. I humble, I abase myself, together with Him, before Thy Majesty. I adore Thee with the same humiliation which Jesus practises, and I rejoice and am glad that Jesus renders to Thee, for me, infinite honor and homage."

Repeat many internal acts of this kind. Nor be at all anxious to keep to the words just given, but make use of those which your devotion shall dictate, while you remain recollected in and united with God.

2. In the second part, from the Gospel to the Elevation, you will acquit yourself of the second obligation. Casting a brief glance over your most grievous sins, reflect on the enormity of your debt toward Divine Justice, and say with a contrite heart:

"Behold, O my God, the traitor who has so many times rebelled against Thee. Pierced with grief, I abominate and detest my numerous sins, while I offer for them that same satisfaction which Jesus offers on the altar. I offer to Thee all the

merits of Jesus, Jesus Himself, God and man, Who now, as an unbloody Victim, pleads anew for me His bloody sacrifice on the cross. I offer all that He does on that altar as my Mediator and Advocate, imploring of Thee to pardon me through His most precious Blood. I unite myself with the cry of that loving Blood, and I beseech of Thee mercy for my sins, so grievous and so many. The Blood of Jesus cries for mercy. O my God, if my tears move Thee not, let the groans of my Jesus move Thee; that mercy which He obtained for the whole human race on the cross — why should He not obtain it for me on this altar? Oh yes, I hope that in virtue of that most precious Blood, Thou wilt pardon all my most grievous transgressions, for which I shall persevere in weeping to the last breath of my life."

Make many such acts, and be sure that in this way you will fully discharge the debt of your many sins.

3. During the third part, from the Elevation till Communion reflect on the great and manifold benefits either bestowed on you or designed for you by God, and then offer to Him in return a gift of infinite value, that is, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Then invite all the angels also, and all the saints, to thank God in your behalf, in the following, or some similar words;

"Behold me, my most beloved God, laden with the benefits, both general and particular, which Thou deignest to bestow on me in time, and to store up for me in eternity. I know that Thy mercies toward me have been and are infinite,

but yet I am ready to repay Thee all, even to the last farthing. Behold, I thank and repay Thee by this most precious Body, this divine Blood, which I present to Thee by the hands of Thy priest. I am certain that this offering which I make is sufficient to repay all the gifts Thou hast bestowed on me. This gift of infinite value is by itself worth all the gifts which I have received, which I do now receive, and am yet to receive from Thee. O ye holy angels and all ye blessed ones in heaven, help me to thank my God, and to offer Him, in thanksgiving for such benefits, not only this, but all the Masses, which are being actually celebrated throughout the world, in order that His loving beneficence may remain fully recompensed for so many graces which He has bestowed on me, which He is now about to bestow, and will bestow throughout all eternity."

Oh, how pleasing to our good God will be such an affectionate thanksgiving! This oblation, surpassing all other gifts, and of infinite value, has greater efficacy than all other offerings.

4. In the fourth part, fom the Communion to the end, after having made a spiritual Communion while the priest communicated sacramentally, look upon God Who is in you, and then summon up holy courage to ask of Him many graces, knowing that at that time Jesus unites Himself to you, and prays and supplicates in your behalf. Therefore enlarge your heart, and do not ask things of small importance, but ask great graces, your offering being so great, namely, that of His Divine Son. Say to Him with an humble heart:

"Most gracious God, too well I recognize myself unworthy of Thy favors. I confess my supreme unworthiness, and that because of so many and so grievous sins I deserve not to be heard. But how shalt Thou be able to refuse attention to Thy Divine Son Who on this altar intercedes for me, and offers to Thee, in my behalf, His life and His Blood? My most loving God, hear the prayer of this my great Advocate, and for His sake grant me all the graces which Thou knowest to be necessary for accomplishing the great affair of my eternal salvation. And now that I take heart to ask of Thee a general pardon of all my sins, and the grace of final perseverance, I also ask of Thee, my God, trusting in the merits and intercession of Jesus, all virtues in a heroic degree, and all the aids necessary and efficacious for making me a saint. I ask of Thee the conversion of sinners, and particularly of those who belong to me by the ties of blood or by spiritual affinity. I beg of Thee the liberation, not of one soul only, but of all the souls in purgatory. Oh, bring them all out, so that, through the efficacy of this divine sacrifice, that prison where they are being rendered pure may become empty. Convert also all the souls of the living; may this miserable world become a paradise of delight for Thee, where, loved, reverenced and praised in time by all of us, we may come afterward to praise and bless Thee for all eternity."

Pray for yourself, pray for your relatives, pray for the whole Church. Pray with supreme confidence, and rest assured that your prayer, in union with that of Jesus Christ, will be heard.

II.

Three Methods of Prayer,

recommended by St. Ignatius in his Book of Spiritual Exercises.

First Method.

This method consists in an examination, interspersed with aspirations, expressions of contrition, and purposes of amendment. The examination may relate to the commandments of God, or to the capital sins, or to the powers of the soul, viz., memory, understanding and will; or to the senses of the body, to seeing, hearing, etc. The examination is made as follows:

1) Recollect yourself, and ask, What am I about to do? I am about to meditate on . . . .

2) Ask pardon of God for the sins which you have committed, for instance, against the commandments; promise Him to follow His inspirations.

3) Begin your examination. Make it not as for confession, but in the form of a meditation, and so as to render an account to yourself before God on the subject under consideration. Thus: "In what have I offended God against the first commandment? — In what against faith, hope, charity, religion? — Let your examination be very brief. Then ask pardon of God for your faults, and promise Him to amend them. Add aspirations, for instance, I believe, O God, strengthen my faith! Pardon my want of confidence in Thee! O God, may I love Thee ever more and more!" — After examining yourself on the first commandment, proceed to the second, and so on.

After the time you have set apart for prayer is over, finish it at whatever point you may happen to be, reserving the rest for the next day.

If you take for the subject of your exercise the capital sins, or the five senses, or the powers of the soul, the method remains the same, but you will ask yourself: In what manner have I offended by pride, envy, etc.? Or, How have I sinned with my eyes, my tongue etc.? — Or, have I sinned with my memory, my understanding, etc.? — Close with an *Our Father.*

It is also an excellent exercise to consider what use Our Divine Saviour and His Blessed Mother made of their senses: How pure, how modest they were in their looks; how circumspect, how charitable in their words; how mortified in their senses.— Then ask yourself how you have used your senses: Have you followed the example of Jesus and Mary? — If you have in any way offended, resolve to be more careful in future.

Second Method.

This method is easier, and generally also more effective than the first. It consists in joining vocal with mental prayer. Take, for instance, the *Our Father*, the *Hail Mary*, the *Salve Regina*, or some other prayer, and whilst saying it, meditate on all its words, proceeding slowly from one to the other, and dwelling on one as long as you can occupy your thoughts with it. — For illustration, read the following meditation on the *Ave Maria.*

At the beginning say, "I will meditate on the *Ave Maria.* Holy Virgin, obtain for me the grace to perform this exercise well."

Adore God, invoke the assistance of the Holy Ghost, and then, proceed as follows.

"*Hail!*" — Who speaks thus? The archangel Gabriel. — To whom? To the Blessed Virgin Mary. — I also salute thee, O Mary, my Queen, my Mother, the Mother of my Redeemer. It is my duty to do homage to thee, to whom the archangel brought the message of heaven, "Hail!" I unite myself with heaven and earth, with angels and men in saluting thee.

"*Mary!*" O sweet, O consoling name! Name repeated everywhere with sentiments of love! Mary! This sweet name is a help to the weak, a consolation to the afflicted, the hope of sinners, the last refuge of the dying. Mary! If I should employ the whole time of this my excercise in speaking this holy and wonderful name, in meditating on and admiring it, I should spend it most profitably.— The name of Mary means Star of the sea. Mary well deserves this application: she is the star that guides us through the dangers of life. It means Mistress, Queen: this she is indeed: Mistress and Queen of angels and men. — O Mary, be my Star, my Mistress, and my Queen for ever!

"*Full of grace!*" — A vessel that is full cannot contain more: if anything be added it overflows. Thus it was with Mary. Her soul and heart were full of grace, love and holy desires. — Full of grace! Hence no space remained to be filled; sin could not enter into her. Immaculate Virgin, in thee all is grace, no sin. — Full of grace! — Immaculate in her conception, she received later that measure of grace described in the Gospel as a "good

measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over." (Luke VI. 38.) In the mystery of the Incarnation the measure of Mary's grace became ineffable, she received the Author of grace Himself. Full of grace! — She was so replete with grace, that she was enabled to enrich us with it from out of her abundance. — I will often have recourse to this fountain of grace — to Mary. She is full of grace — and I, alas, with what am I filled?

"*The Lord is with thee.*" — He is with and in the souls of all the just, but in a special manner in and with Mary, the most perfect and just of all creatures. The Eternal Father is with her as with His most beloved Daughter; the Son of God is with her as with His Mother, whom He elected from all eternity; the Holy Ghost is with her as with His Spouse, whom He embellished with all His gifts. — The Lord is with thee! — He is always with thee: He was always with thee, because thou didst never compel Him to depart from thee by sin. — O my God, be always with me, and never permit me to be separated from thee!

"*Blessed art thou amongst women!*" — In her Canticle, Mary herself proclaimed that all generations would call her blessed. And behold, the earth is dotted with sanctuaries dedicated to her honor; thousands upon thousand praise her; love and veneration for her are found with young and old, rich and poor, saints and sinners. — Where is there another woman honored like Mary! And what other woman ever deserved to be thus honored?

"*And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*" — Jesus, name divine, brought from heaven by the archangel; Jesus, Saviour of the world, Son of the Most High, Son of Mary, fruit of her most pure womb! — O holy Virgin, I congratulate thee on having become the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of thy and my God. Blessed be Jesus, blessed in heaven, blessed on earth! — O Jesus, I praise Thee, I love Thee, I adore Thee! Blessed be Thy holy name now and for evermore!

Other aspirations may be added; but this example will suffice to explain this method. — It can be applied to any other prayer or text of Holy Scripture. — If the time of prayer be occupied by two or three words, recite the rest as usual in the end, and continue your meditation the next day.

Third Method.

It consists in saying some vocal prayer so slowly, that we can add an aspiration of our own to every word. Take, for instance, the prayer:

"*Soul of Christ, sanctify me!*"—After recollecting the presence of God, and asking His assistance to perform this exercise with profit, you begin: "*Soul*" — "of Christ" — "sanctify me!" — Whilst slowly repeating these and the following words, you dwell on their meaning, on the majesty of Him to Whom they are addressed, on your own unworthiness, misery and sinfulness.

This method is adapted to nearly everybody's capacity, and may be used even during manual labor, etc. It is especially recommended to those who have contracted the evil habit of saying their prayers hurriedly.

III.

St. Bonaventure's Maxims of Piety.

A reliable experience teaches, that no man can serve God perfectly unless he strives to entirely detach himself from the world. If, accordingly, we wish to follow Our Lord and Saviour, we must comply with the advice of the prophet Isaias, viz., "Shake thyself from the dust, O Jerusalem; sit up, loose the bonds," (Isai. LII. 2.); that is, first burst asunder the ties of sin, and then loosen the oppressing burdens. When we are free from earthly affairs we can follow the Saviour with unimpeded steps; hence the Apostle says, "The body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer." (Rom. VI. 6.) From this it folllows that we can let the care for any created thing occupy our hearts only so far as it calls forth a feeling of our love for God. A manifold and frequent occupation with various things not only destroys the soul and interrupts the sweet rest of inward peace, but also awakens vain fancies and representations in the soul, and causes stormy agitations which become very molesting. And this is always the case when we busy ourselves too much with these things.

We must, therefore, lay aside the oppressive attachment to every earthly thing, in order that, without any impeding weight, we may hastily go to Him Who invites us to our salvation, and with Whom abundant refreshment and the greatest peace is to be found. "Come to me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (Matth.

XI. 28.) O Lord, whom dost Thou need? Why dost Thou call me? What hast Thou in common with us? O sweet and holy words, "Come unto me and I will refresh you." O wonderful condescension of our God! O unutterable love! Who has ever done the like? Who ever heard or has seen similar? — Behold, He invites His enemies! He calls sinners, He urges the ungrateful! "Come unto me and learn of me!" — "Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart; and you shall find rest for your souls." (Matth. XI. 29.) O God-like and consoling words! Sharper than a two-edged sword they stir up the inmost recess of the heart. They are filled with superabundant sweetness, and penetrate the depths of the soul. O Christian soul, awaken to this extremely ardent love, to the sensation of this great sweetness, to the loveliness of this sublime fragrancy! He who cannot perceive this must surely be ill, not of sound sense, and near the portals of death.

Yes, my soul, glow and overflow in love and melt in sweetness. Let no one prevent you to enter, to embrace, to taste. What seek we more? What hope we greater? What more do we ask in this life? We possess all goods in Christ. But alas, O incomprehensible insanity! O miserable weakness! O madness worthy of condemnation! We are called to rest, and rush to toil; we are invited to consolation, and seek grief; joy is promised us, and we prefer sorrow. O strange illness and wretched perversity! We have become insensible, and almost worse than the idols: we have

eyes and see not; we have ears and hear not; we have sense and discern not; we declare the bitter to be sweet; and the sweet bitter. O my God, whence shall the correction of this perversity come? Whence the atonement for such an offence ? Indeed, the strength lies not in us; it can only be given us as a present by Thee. Thou alone canst set us right; Thou alone canst atone for our sins; for Thou alone, our salvation and redemption, knowest our nature. Thou dost it only with those who acknowledge themselves full of misery, in the deepest abyss, and who believe that they can be delivered only by Thee. — Let us, therefore, raise our eyes to God alone, and see where we now lie dashed to the ground. For whoever does not know the depth of his own fall, cares less to rise again. But when we have perceived it, let us cry loudly out of the depth to God, that He may lend us His helping hand, which can never be powerless when extended to save. Let us "not therefore lose our confidence, which hath a great reward." (Hebr. X. 35.) "Let us draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith (Hebr. X. 22.), and reap the salvation of our souls as the fruit thereof.

Let us by no means delay. Now life calls us; salvation awaits us now, now our misery urges us to enter. What, then, shall we do? Why are we slothful? Why do we delay? Let us hasten to enter into that rest of eternal joy, where great and inscrutable things, without number and measure, are prepared for us. Yes, may the longing for Jerusalem come into our hearts! Let us sigh for our home and yearn for our mother! Let us enter

into the power of our Lord, and behold our King Who reigns therein, and may our hearts soften at the thought of His mercy! From our whole heart let us thank Him Who, in spite of our ingratitude, did not take His mild mercy from us; Who gave the desire to walk in the way of His commandments, in which nobody can walk without desire. This gift by no means is trifling, and must be attributed solely to His grace. The royal prophet asserts that he desired the same: "My soul hath coveted to long for Thy justifications at all times." (Ps. CXVIII. 20.)

But since this desire sometimes becomes weak on account of our too great lukewarmness, carelessness, and neglect, I intended to stir it up by writing some admonitions. They shall show clearly what we must shun, and to what we must aspire. If we reflect on them with zeal and fervor, we may thereby regain our former ardor, and increase the love of God by virtue and grace, until finally the perfect yearning after the eternal tabernacles takes root in our hearts.

Since it has pleased God to place you from the miserable servitude of Egypt in the liberty of the children of God, Who called you by His grace to represent in you the image of His Son; since moreover, you yourself have placed your foot on the path of the new man, which, as a narrow path of humility winds along between fear and love, you can rise in the same path of humility to a higher one, and exercise yourself in grand things, concerning which certain admonitions now follow.

1. *Forego all pleasures of this world.*

If it is your earnest desire to follow in the footsteps of your Saviour, you must, above all, firmly place your hope in the Lord, and expect none of the joys of this world.

2. *Thoroughly root out vices and concupiscenses.*

You must endeavor to cleanse yourself entirely from all vices and evil desires, as far as this is compatible with the present condition of man. The old leaven of corruption and wickedness must be swept out, that you may follow Christ Our Lord in a new life. For as long as you have not previously broken the chains of malice your soul will always remain embarrassed in darkness and heavily burdened, and cannot raise itself to the more elevated things.

3. *Dissolve every outward tie.*

To be joined to God with an undivided and pure heart you must free yourself from all outward connections.

4. *Endure all misfortunes with patience.*

For the love of God, the Most High, and of Christ your Spouse, you must bear all the persecutions of this world with indifference, and as far as possible even make a resolution to find your joy only in the sufferings of Christ. Contempt for all worldly joys will make you cheerful even in adversity, considering it as prepared for you to cleanse you from sin, and for the benefit of your soul.

5. *Blame no one.*

Perceiving that you have offended God, seek the cause thereof in no creature.

6. *Despise yourself, and be truly poor.*

You must despise yourself and desire to be despised by all. Therefore you must detach yourself from all things, and always choose the rough, mean and needy as far as possible for you. But you must not demand the same of others; on the contrary, you must esteem them worthy of every joy, and consequently not only rejoice sincerely at their delight, but you must be kind and officious to them. Only when a manifest offence of God is in question, which can by no means be excused, you should be filled with pity, fear and sincere sorrow.

7. *Avoid all honors.*

Always persevere in fear, and avoid, as a fatal disease, all flatteries of this world, all honors, all fame, all favor, and all vain and boastful talk. Guard yourself strictly, and be always full of distrust towards yourself. For when you have gained a complete victory over yourself, no enemy, either inward or outward, will injure you.

8. *Be truly humble.*

Although Our Lord Jesus Christ was Lord of all things, heavenly, earthly and subterranean, He, for our sake, took the figure of the lowest slave, and voluntarily subjected Himself to the power of man. Through love for Him humble yourself; look upon every one as your master, and sincerely think yourself the servant of all, and in your intercourse with them conduct yourself like a servant. Then you will constantly be at rest, and have peace with all, and take scandal from no one.

9. *Be not concerned for, and meddle with nothing that does not benefit you spiritually.*

Engage in nothing at all that has no connection with the benefit of your soul. Concern yourself about nothing when you can gain no advantage for your soul. Do not permit yourself to be drawn into these affairs by any one.

10. *Strictly guard all your senses.*

Keep strict guard over your eyes and all the senses of your body in every respect. You must never wish to see or hear anything except what may benefit your soul. Likewise, be very careful to restrain your tongue. Never speak, unless you are asked or compelled by necessity or evident advantage. Even in this case always speak with a certain fear and modesty, short and humbly. Shun all verbosity, and every occasion thereof, if possible.

11. *Love solitude, and prayer in the night.*

Yearn for holy solitude, and always consider the practice of prayer during the night very precious. Offer God the sacrifice of your prayer with recollection of spirit, with glowing devotion, and profound humility.

12. *Say your prayers with great devotion.*

During your prayers forget all earthly things. In meditation you must confine your mind persistently to the heavenly mysteries, and perform your prayer with such devotion, reverence, joy and fear, as if you were in the midst of the angelic choirs, and bodily in the presence of God, offering Him your sacrifice of praise with them.

13. *Above all, have a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

You must always, and with the greatest ardor venerate our glorious Queen, the Blessed Mother of Our Lord. In all your necessities, dangers and misfortunes, you must have recourse to her, ask for her protection, choose her for your Patroness and Mediatrix, and commit your affairs to her with confidence and humility. She is the Mother of mercy; endeavor, therefore, to offer her daily a particular respect. But that your devotion and service may please her, try to imitate, with unbounded zeal, her immaculate purity and all her virtues, to preserve yourself pure in body and soul, and walk in the path of her humility and meekness.

14. *Choose a spiritual Guide.*

Wherever you may be, always choose a saintly man for your spiritual Father. Let him be pious, prudent and learned, but more by experience in daily life than by excellent speaking. He may lead you to the love of God and inflame you therewith by approved doctrine and effective example. Have recourse to him in all necessities, to find instruction and spiritual consolation.

15. *Avoid melancholy and sadness.*

Zealously guard yourself against despondency and sadness; for this imperceptibly leads to confusion and to death. Be always cheerful and at ease, inwardly as well as outwardly. Contradict no one, resist no one in anything whatever; but be satisfied with all men in everything and in every way, as long as it is not inconsistent with the glory of God and your salvation.

16. *Take good example from all, and be scandalized by nothing.*

Conform all the inclinations of your heart and will to the will of God. Everything must be edifying, nothing scandalous for you in the world by the power of the grace and purity of heart and innocence, which you have received from the bounty of God. Do not allow yourself to be excited beyond due limit by the indigence of others. Add not your own to foreign injustice, and do not defile yourself by another's sin. Take care lest you fall so much deeper into the abyss whilst endeavoring to liberate others. Whatever you cannot repair without injuring yourself, cover with friendly charity, and commit it to that excellent Wisdom which can cause good to spring from evil. Thus with the grace of God you can gain, from the evil as well as from the good, profit for your spiritual growth.

17. *Guard your heart.*

Guard your heart with the greatest vigilance. Deliver it entirely to spiritual practices, and let no desire for earthly things make an impression thereon; in order that, entirely detached from all creatures, it may freely occupy itself with the Creator of all.

18. *Sincerely love your neighbor.*

Perceive in every man the likeness and similitude of the Divine Majesty; therefore love all men with a great, ardent charity. Be solicitous for all especially for the sick, the poor and the needy; yet, in such a way that the distraction may cause no disadvantage to your spiritual progress. Treat all as a good mother treats her beloved only son.

19. *Join prayer with holy deeds.*

Have you heart always in good order and united with God, so that all of your works, both spiritual and temporal, may be a true prayer. Perform all your duties, especially the more humble ones, with such love, as if you performed them for Christ in person. This you can and must think in all truth, since He Himself says in the Gospel, "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." (Matth. XXV. 40.)

20. *Be obedient and subject to all.*

Seek to preserve the honor and reverence due to all, not only to the great, but even to the very lowest. You must not only be obedient to your elders or superiors, but you must subject yourself to all without exception, by denying yourself for Christ's sake. Therefore, always endeavor to do the will of others in good and indifferent things. Molest no one in any regard; on the contrary love all with the love of Christ, and show yourself kind and affable to all alike, but shun all particular friendships and intimate relations and conversations. Above all beware lest you ever, by your speech, actions or behavior, provoke either yourself or others to anger, hatred, insult, noise, murmuring, calumny, scandal, flattery, etc. in any way.

21. *Keep secret your spiritual afflictions and consolations.*

Try to conceal as much as possible from all the virtues and special graces which the mercy of God works in or through you; as also your afflictions,

struggles, good resolutions, etc. Only that may be excepted which you must tell the priest in self-accusation, or which you disclose to a spiritual friend of approved character for your own welfare.

22. *Always and everywhere think of God.*

Be entirely detached from all creatures, and direct the whole strength of your soul with such exertion and such glowing ardor, that you, as it were, forget all earthly things wherever you are; that you think of God in all your undertakings, day and night, every hour, yea, every moment, and that you may be pierced with the belief and consciousness that you really are in His immediate presence, and that He sees your heart. In this consciousness always be filled with great reverence, fear and love, and guided by right distinction. At one time cast yourself at the feet of God in His infinite majesty, and implore Him in the greatest bitterness of soul, to pardon your sins. At another, wounded by the sword of pity, stand before the cross of the Son of God, and amidst weeping and lamentations reflect upon His most holy passion and death. Now put the whole life of Our Redeemer as the rule of conduct before your eyes, by which you must correct your transgressions and perversity; then again, in spirit, with careful meditation, contemplate the innumerable and immense benefits of God, and seized by His holy love, continue in fervent thanksgiving. Sometimes reflect on God in all creatures, and inflame your heart with sweet love; at others, meditate on His wisdom, goodness and bounty, and praise and glorify

Him with the greatest homage. Then, again, you may, impelled by a desire for your heavenly home, long for Him with ardent yearning, or, meditating on the all-surpassing love of God, full of joyful and immense wonder, lose yourself with heart and spirit entirely in Him. Review in your mind how you now plunge yourself into the abyss, then flee, then fall, and how God holds you, raises you, keeps you from the abyss, and draws you to Himself. Reflect, moreover, how God supports you in all things, despite your ingratitude, and when the inmost depths of His ineffable mercy are opened to you, give yourself entirely up to the greatest love for Him, and dissolve yourself in tears. Often, also, reflect with care on the innumerable hidden, profound and secret, as also very wonderful judgments of His justice, and offer Him faithfully and constantly, in all, your most hearty adoration with ardent love, and with unlimited, humble, reverential and submissive fear. But above all, constantly bear in your soul and in your body the memory of His most holy passion, and seek as much as possible to conform yourself to Him.

23. *Carefully avoid the snares of the devil.*

With constant vigilance be on your guard to render yourself secure from the wiles of the old enemy, with the greatest caution. For he often transforms himself into an angel of light, and at all times and in all places lays nets and snares that he may, if possible, entangle your soul. Beware of them, and become so sincerely small and insignificant in your own eyes by humility, that even

his finest nets cannot hold you. If you constantly look upon God with the eye of your mind, you will assuredly be protected from the devil's snares, for God, Who watches over you, never sleeps or becomes fatigued.

24. *Often examine your conscience, and candidly confess your sins.*

To remain inflamed with the holy ardor of longing for Heaven, and to preserve the beautiful purity of body and soul, immaculate innocence and tenderness of conscience, take the greatest pains lest you become lukewarm or desist from the fervor of your beginning. For this purpose, examine your life every day. Since, however, there is no man who observes discipline and justice in such a way that he neglects and forgets nothing; it is necessary that you very often hasten to the bath of penance, and accuse yourself of your sins with sorrow and sighs. In this self-accusation or confession you must relate and disclose to the priest, as if he were God, all your sins, universally, truly and sincerely, without covering them in any way with the veil of excuse, palliation or coloring. First mention your omissions with regard to God and His service, especially in regard to prayer, mental and vocal; then tell the faults you have committed against the observance of justice towards your neighbor, and finally, the transgressions which resulted from careless watching over your senses and the rising thoughts. Confession, however, must always be accompanied by contrition and satisfaction, so that you are sorry for all your faults, not only for the great, but also for the small

ones. Your sorrow must induce you to beware lest you fall again into your former sins, and you must endeavor to remove all causes and occasions of sin, although they may have grown to your heart, and be ever so dear to you. For, in such a case, according to the word of Our Saviour, the eye that gives scandal must be torn out, that is, we must avoid the occasions of sin, even if they are very pleasing to us, and the consequences and effects of their avoidance displeases us very much. On this account the struggle in this war is so vehement and difficult, and on the same account one must, according to the command of God, be blind, deaf, dumb and insensible to all wherein the soul gains nothing. That you may be impelled the more to the observance of the heavenly doctrine of the divine commandments, and be inflamed with greater zeal, endeavor, at least once a day, as also every night, to reflect upon the following five points with attention, devotion and sincerity: how short human life is, how slippery the way, how uncertain death, how great the reward of the good, how terrible the punishment of the wicked. In this way your service of God will not be without fear, and your joy not without trembling.

25. *Even if we were perfect, we ought in our own eyes to be very poor and unworthy.*

The last is, that when you have done all things well by the grace of God, you acknowledge yourself an unworthy servant and sinner, and deem yourself undeserving of any kindness on the part of God. You must, at the same time, preserve the most firm faith, be full of love to God, and with

great confidence hope of the all-merciful Father that He will show His clemency to you. In this way, first dig the ditch of humility, then lay in it the firm foundation of faith; upon this erect shining walls of a continual fervent love, adorn the same with the images of all virtues, and finally place upon it the splendid roof of a most happy hope. If you have thus arranged the dwelling in your heart in every respect, the heavenly inhabitant, the sweet Guest of faithful souls, Whose joy it is to be with the children of men, will, during the present time, or rather exile, by His grace live within you, until at the end of this life you will, clothed in the bright garment of everlasting immortality, be made worthy to behold with great joy, and with all the saints, in the home of heavenly bliss the splendor of His face. There is eternal happiness, there the end and perfect fulfillment of all our desires.

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Christian soul! May you be thoroughly convinced that you cannot follow the footsteps of Our Divine Redeemer, unless you have first perfectly denied yourself; just as you cannot, without continual care and labor, obtain His grace. Unless you knock at His gates without interruption, you cannot enter into the peace of the heart. If you do not always and zealously keep yourself in the fear of the Lord, you will very soon fall into the abyss. But if you remain faithful in all things referred to above, and zealously practise yourself therein, I hope, through the mercy of Our Redeemer, that by His grace He will make you worthy in the present

life to obtain possession of His glory in the one to come. May He Who is One in Three Persons grant you this, and may He be blessed for ever and ever. Amen.

IV.

St. Bonaventure's Exhortation on the Imitation of Christ.

Impress upon your heart a true image of Our Lord Jesus Christ: how humble He was among men, how kind to His disciples, how compassionate towards the poor, to whom He likened Himself in all things, and who seemed to constitute the favorite portion of His company. Consider, how slighting no one, He did not flatter the rich; how free He was from the cares of this world, not anxiously intent upon the necessaries of life. Consider, how patient He was when offended, and how meek in His answers, not revenging Himself by cutting replies, but desirous to conciliate His adversaries by humble and meek words; how patiently He bore troubles and want, and how compassionate He was towards the oppressed; how He descended to the imperfections of others, not despising sinners; how peaceful He was in His whole demeanor. Consider, how anxious He was for the salvation of souls, for whose sake He deigned to become man, suffer and die. Consider his fervor in prayer, and how ready he was to serve others. Regard Him as your model in all your actions, when speaking and when silent, alone or in company. You will thus enkindle your love toward Him, obtain His friend-

ship and grace, and perfect yourself in every virtue.

Let it be your sole desire and prayer, constantly to meditate on some mystery of His life, in order to excite yourself to love and follow Him: for the more we are intent upon His virtues, the nearer will we draw to Him, and finally we will partake of His heavenly glory. Amen.